

ALAN! ALAN!

EIRENE WIGRAM

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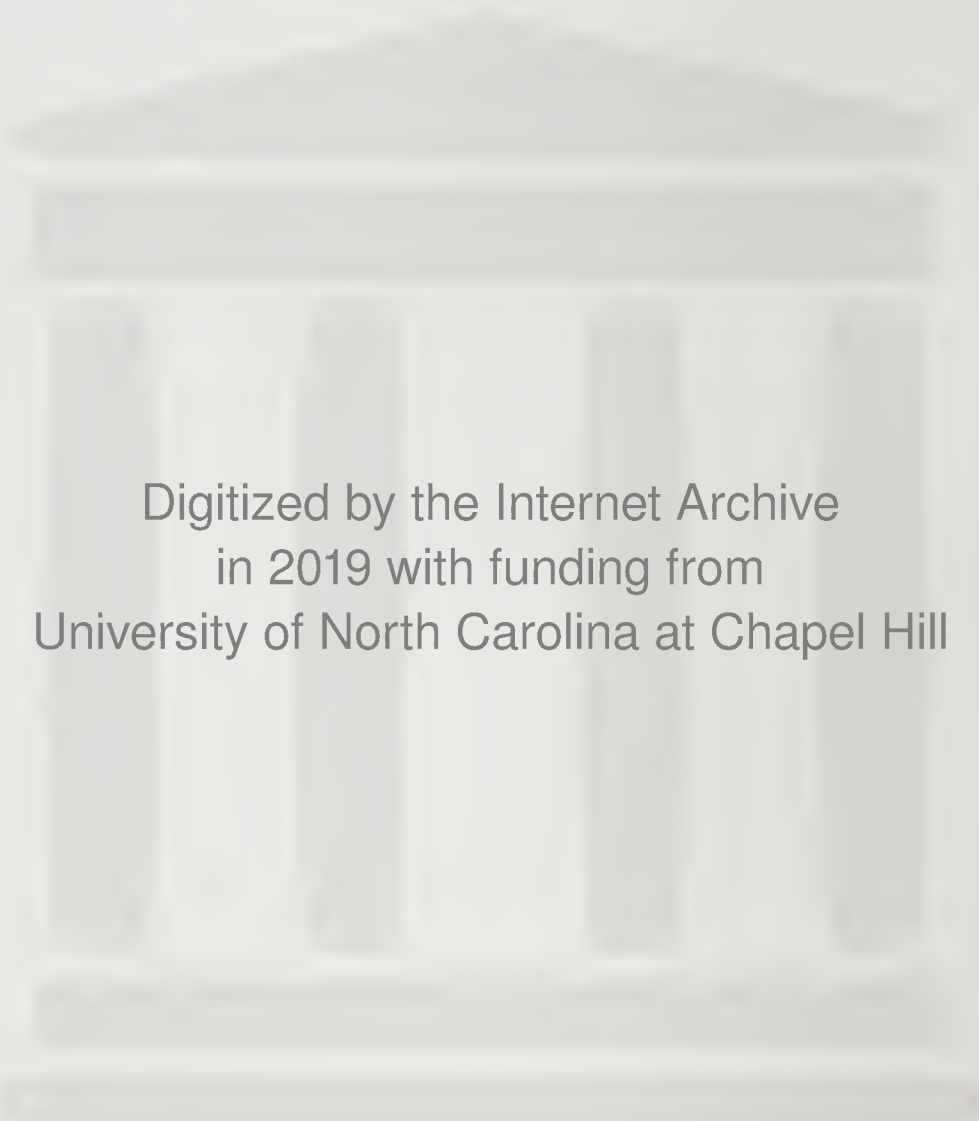
Forgiveness and the destiny which dogs the incapacity to forgive is the motive of this novel. "Alan! Alan!" was the cry for ever half-unconsciously on the lips of the old laird who waited for the return of his dead son. How the cry proved ultimately effective is told in a vigorous tale which has a timely background of War.

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A STORY OF ENGLAND'S WAR-TIME

BY

EIRENE WIGRAM

AUTHOR OF

"THE AFFAIR OF THE ENVELOPE," "FIRM FOUNDATIONS"

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ALAN! ALAN!

PROLOGUE

I

WHEN Alan McQuoid first came to Kimberley he lodged with a doctor named Ingham, whom Carnmoney had recommended as a shrewd and honest man, well able to put him up to knowing things. The doctor took him round to the favourite club, introduced him, and advised him to listen to gossip.

It was just like Alan McQuoid's luck to make friends with Carnmoney on the voyage out. Anybody might make a useful acquaintance, but Carnmoney, the gentleman millionaire! Starting in life with all the odds against him, the luck always came to Alan McQuoid's feet. Some people said that it was a question of personality, that luck had very little to do with it at all. Others maintained that the question of questions concerning Alan had never yet been asked. He possessed charm, ability, and power, but personality is not the same as character; it remained

to be seen what he would do when tested. And yet it told heavily in his favour that he had made a conquest of the Kimberley diamond-owner, the man who was chairman of the Tiefgrad Mines. Carnmoney was a gentleman, although it is not easy for a very rich man to enter that inheritance.

Lewis Carnmoney walked about the deck a good bit during the voyage, talking to The McQuoid. Alan possessed a peculiarly barren honour, the right of signing himself The McQuoid. Carnmoney knew his history. It was a strange and rather pathetic history, and that may have made a difference. Carnmoney talked, and the other listened, putting in a remark, and, perhaps, a question. All this led to the Scotchman becoming, first, Carnmoney's agent at Kimberley and eventually manager of the Tiefgrad Mines. It also led, which is hardly less important, to Alan going out to Slogger Jim's farm. It is worth while remembering that it was Carnmoney who first told him about the farm at all. It lay in a little hollow of the Veld, something short of an hour's ride from Kimberley.

"I don't say it answers to drink and gamble heavily, but if you stand drinks to other men you set their tongues wagging. You look like a man who could do it in moderation, and listen to the others and keep your own counsel."

So, in pursuance of such advice as this, Alan first heard of Slogger Jim's farm.

The Slogger was a farmer; he made no money

by his farming, but yet he was reputed a rich man. There was a barn in his farmhouse, a barn which was never used for hay and corn, but which, with the help of certain green baize tables, added greatly to his gains. Men came there almost nightly, but Saturday afternoon and Sunday were the days of the biggest rendezvous.

When Alan McQuoid went there he was in the mood to show pretty plainly that his aristocratic prejudices were offended. The Slogger invited him to come into the house, admitting that he had a rough lot upon the premises.

"I don't pretend to be a swell myself, but I know what's what as well as a better man. Let me introduce you to Mrs. James Nugent."

Jim's name was Nugent, or so he said, and nobody thought it worth while to contradict him. The lady whom he introduced, however, was usually spoken of as Mrs. Slogger, or simply Mrs. Jim. She was extraordinarily pretty, with curling chestnut hair, deep blue eyes, and the complexion of a rose-leaf. Alan had no difficulty in deciding that she was a very superior person to her husband. He had heard of her from Ingham, who told him certain details, and who admitted that he did not believe they were man and wife.

"The woman has much influence over him as a rule, except when he's drunk, and he drinks freely. One day I found him thrashing her, and I told him, almost at the risk of my life, that I would not be answerable for the consequences.

I live in terror of his really killing her, and asking me to certify death from natural causes."

Alan McQuoid understood the last when he recalled Slogger Jim's height and weight and inches. Alan made up his mind that it was his bounden duty to go there sometimes and try to keep an eye upon her. He had not, however, gone there very often before the end came, as we shall see directly.

It was Saturday afternoon when Alan McQuoid rode to the Slogger's farm for the last time. He was late in getting there; his horse had cast a shoe, and he was obliged to go two miles out of the way to the nearest farrier on whom he could rely. Alan was always very particular about his horses, and both clever and gentle with them. It annoyed him not a little that he should be so late when Jenny was expecting him, and would be greatly disappointed. His detour by the farrier's had caused him to approach the farm that evening by an unusual route. Mounting a steep kopje, and resting his horse for a moment at the top, he saw the farm beneath him.

He had often seen it before, but that day it looked dark, evil, and sinister against the setting sun. The scene reminded him of a never-to-be-forgotten episode in his early boyhood, when he had stood on the side of a Scottish mountain looking down on a Scottish castle. He had stood beside a turnstile; a broken signpost on the kopje reminded him oddly of the turnstile. "That way madness lies!" He recognised the folly and

FORGIVENESS AND DESTINY

tragedy of that scene, and knew that naught could mend it. It was no use thinking about it; all the great victories and tragedies of life are wrought out within the brain.

He rode forward to the farm, and was amazed to find the door standing open and the place deserted. There was always a rendezvous at Slogger's on a Saturday. That pause upon the kopje was the last moment of inaction that he knew for many feverish hours. As he reached the open door, yell after yell rang out from the barn; it was Jenny's voice. He started to run to it, stumbled over a heap of dirt in the farmyard, and ran on once more.

"Leave the girl alone!" Alan's command rang out like the report of a Martini rifle. He strode forward into the barn, raising the butt-end of his riding-whip to show he intended to be obeyed. The place was deserted, save for the two at the extreme end of it, the victim and her tormentor. Jenny's dress was half torn off, her fair, abundant hair straggled down over her coarse white chemise. Jim held her against the wall, and a stream of blows from his hard-clenched fist fell on her ribs and shoulders. Her back was towards the door, but the head was turned. Alan could see her features as she screamed for help. But he paused, preferring to issue his orders instead of enforcing them, with the instincts of a born commander. The Slogger stopped in sheer amazement; it was long since any one had spoken to him in such a voice as that. A fire was burning on the hearth,

and, partly to show his mastery, Alan strode up to the fire and threw on another log. He was very cool. He saw that the place was empty; and he read the history of that afternoon with exceeding clearness. Jim had lost heavily, and therefore cleared the barn. Cowards! they had all run away from the brute in his drunken fury, and left the woman at his mercy. Jim was more than a match for most men. Alan realised fully that if he fought he must win, or it would be the worse for Jenny. Then, and not till then, when he saw the Slogger's hand creep to his trouser pocket, did Alan pull out his revolver. In less than ninety seconds since the Scotchman entered the barn they were standing facing each other, both their pistols raised and pointed.

No one, not even Jenny, who stood watching, could say which fired first; the bullets crossed each other in the air. Alan was conscious of a heavy blow on his shoulder; he almost thought that it was some one from behind. But the thing that astonished him was the thing he saw. At first he could hardly believe that it had happened, the one irrevocable thing that nobody can undo. One minute the great brute stood there breathing heavily and fiercely, like an enraged beast, his weight and strength formidable even to The McQuoid. Then suddenly he threw up his hands as helpless as a baby, reeled, and dropped, and fell. He lay where he had fallen; half an ounce of lead had entered the right temple; the wound was very small.

Owing partly to the pain of his own wound, the next half-hour always stood out in Alan McQuoid's memory like some evil dream. It was weird, yet fantastic, real because of its improbability. No one could have imagined such events as these. After a little while, when he realised what had happened, he went over to the body, knelt, and felt it carefully. He was quite dead, the eye was already beginning to glaze over and the jaw had fallen. Then he realised that Jenny was standing beside him with hot water and a sponge. She looked demure and staid, she had thrown a grey shawl over her shoulders and wound her hair into a ball. It was she who took command; she told him to go away, but first to help her to bury the man, and they would swear that he had killed himself. She repeated the last sentence with a kind of dogmatic fervour. He wondered for the moment if she herself believed it.

"He has killed himself, he always told me that he would if I betrayed him; he must have thought that I had betrayed him."

She was bathing his wounded shoulder as she spoke, but he turned on her angrily and half upset the basin. A lie of that sort, he was about to tell her, was certain to lead to complications in the end. But his anger was checked as he saw that she herself was nearly fainting with all the blows that she had received.

"He has broken one of my ribs, I think," she said faintly, in reply to Alan's look. It was as

though the dead man had put forth all the strength of his last malice and had maimed them both.

Alan stood still thinking. He wanted to do the right thing, the square thing, the thing that he would like others to hear about. He must take her down to Kimberley. Ingham, as a doctor, could put her into his hospital, or Mrs. Ingham would look after her. They must not bury the man—they had scarcely strength for it—but they could straighten out the body, and find something wherewith to cover it. It was when they were straightening out the body that the new stumbling-block showed itself before McQuoid's feet. He had walked bravely and warily so far that evening on a path that was narrow as the proverbial tight-rope. He didn't regret the bullet; to the end of his life, in spite of all that happened, he never regretted the bullet. The courts at Kimberley may not be very particular, but they acquitted him of everything save justifiable self-defence. Jenny declared upon oath, and declared truly, that the Slogger had been the first to pull out his pistol.

But it was just before they started that the woman slipped her hand into the dead man's breast-pocket and drew out a little bag. It was dirty and rather heavy, and there was something hard and sharp inside; it was impossible to mistake the contents. Looking strangely old and careworn, she told him to take them, they belonged to him as much as to any one; if they

were found in her possession she would be accused of murder. Alan slipped them into his pocket, and recalled, as he did so, Dr. Ingham's often-expressed conviction that these two had not been man and wife. Something, he could not have said what, in the way she had treated and handled the dead man confirmed the same idea. She had never cared for Jim, she who had sat on his knee so often, soothing his rage with kisses. This and other things put an end to his half-sentimental, half-chivalrous infatuation concerning her. He helped her on to his horse, despite his wounded shoulder, and started in silence on that three hours' tramp. It was dark before they started; he was anxious to get her under some one else's roof while it could be called to-day.

Alan McQuoid had abundant food for thought in that long tramp through the dark to Kimberley. He thought about the diamonds. Slipping his hand into his pocket he could feel their size and count them, and try to guess their value—nearly a thousand pounds. He was only an agent; he had been offered a partnership and the office of manager if he could invest a thousand pounds. His thoughts had been running for months upon a thousand pounds.

Nearly all the way he made resolutions to hand over the bag as well as the girl to Ingham. He plumed himself upon the sacrifice. A man who could do that would be worthy of any woman,

and he wanted to marry a girl from England as soon as he was rich enough. That strange, passionate desire to be worthy, to have merit, works in different ways.

Alan was still thinking of the diamonds when he sat chatting with the doctor the next morning over the breakfast-table, telling the tale again. Things took on a different aspect: the bright fire, the coffee-cups, even the table-cloth and silver forks made everything look different. He had taken out the dirty linen bag and was fumbling it; he was just about to speak and tell the whole story. Then the doctor asked a question, and asked it brusquely.

“Hallo, what’s that?—a bag of diamonds?”

“No, a bag of sights for my rifle,” replied Alan, and presently, without any haste, he put it away in his breast-pocket. As he did so it occurred to him that the bag might have turned the shot aside if he had taken aim at the heart. The gods had fought for him, his lucky star was in the ascendant, and that showed that he was justified. Men of Alan’s make always believe in luck.

There was one thing that he forgot, possibly only one. McQuoid was a sportsman, he had come from the land where country gentlemen have their fancies about their rifles. There are not a great many people on the veldt who trouble themselves to carry extra sights.

Doubtless for this reason the doctor paced the verandah in silence that afternoon. His wife was making tea; he had been to the inquest, and he

told her all about it, and that McQuoid was cleared.

"Laura," he said, "I am not over happy about that fellow McQuoid; he might easily go to the dogs. Keep friends with him, if you can; he likes and admires you, and it's just possible you might keep him straight."

II

Lewis Carnmoney was staying at Cape Town. When he was at Cape Town he stayed at a hotel, never having started a house of his own there. It saved him trouble, and also fitted in with his ideas; he was not an Afrikaner. He had a home in London, and was making plans for buying a considerable estate in Surrey.

He could well afford little luxuries of that sort. His problem in life is very easily stated: he had some difficulty in disposing of his money. He had taken rather a fancy to young McQuoid, whom he had met on one of the voyages out. Alan had such attractive, pleasant manners, and stood six foot four in his stockings, and carried the prestige of half-forgotten ancestors. Now that he had heard of the little shooting affair, Carnmoney was looking forward to seeing him again. Alan had escaped scot-free, as the millionaire believed, and on the whole the incident had done him good. He had admitted frankly that he had shot the man to save his own life and the girl's as well.

Alan went up to the hotel to see his patron

the very same day that he reached Cape Town. He was on his way to England, he was being sent over at the Company's expense with some business to negotiate. Nevertheless, he was looking forward to a holiday, and guessed that Carnmoney would give him leave to take one.

He was obliged to wait at first, and as he waited he had the sense of being in a great man's ante-room. Other men were waiting ; he listened to their gossip, it was mostly about the Transvaal and Oom Paul. He sent in his card, and as the door opened he heard the earnest tones of Lewis Carnmoney's voice. The millionaire was talking of some expedition in which a man named Jameson might play a part.

Another man was in the room when Alan was shown in. He was standing near the book-shelf in rather a dark corner, pulling books out of the shelves, turning their leaves impatiently. Alan did not look at him very closely, but began talking about the diamond business. After a while Carnmoney asked him about the shooting affair at the farm. Alan repeated the same story that he had told to Ingham and also to the judge.

"And what about your own affairs?" The millionaire spoke lightly; he had been looking forward to that moment. "Did you manage to find that thousand? We have waited for your answer." Carnmoney knew that it was virtually impossible for Alan McQuoid to find a thousand pounds.

Alan, though he was not dense as a rule, did not notice anything, he was in a hurry to get it over. It was curious, but he had dreaded that moment almost as much as Carnmoney had looked forward to it.

"Awfully kind of you," he said. "Yes, I am prepared to invest a thousand pounds as soon as need be."

Carnmoney pushed his cheque-book into a drawer ; it shut with a click which made McQuoid start. Just too late, it flashed across him that perhaps the thing that he had done had been unnecessary after all. Carnmoney said something about giving him a note to his brother who would look after him in England. Alan hardly heard, for the man who had been standing near the book-case came forward and sat down. Alan saw that it was Cecil Rhodes.

During the next quarter of an hour Alan McQuoid had a glimpse of his own utter insignificance. Rhodes sat there silent ; building plans in which human beings were merely pawns on the chess-board. Yet McQuoid knew that the man was taking in everything that was happening and all that was being said. He did not listen, he did not even over-hear, he comprehended everything ; it was the only word. Neither at that time, nor at any other, did Cecil Rhodes send for him or offer him work to do. When he went out of the room The McQuoid knew that he had been weighed in the balance and found wanting.

Strange, elemental forces were at work in Alan McQuoid's character and destiny. It was strange that two such men as Cecil Rhodes and Carnmoney should have judged him so differently. Carnmoney took him at his own valuation, and Alan McQuoid had plenty of imagination and courage. Cecil Rhodes detected the rift within the lute; and fixing his eyes upon it, saw it widen beneath his gaze. He was looking for a man and found nothing there. And yet McQuoid, having imagination and courage, had some of the elements of greatness. They had never been fixed, either by the pressure of external circumstances or the strength of his own will. He had never known the discipline of school in boyhood, or of having to earn his living in his manhood. Perhaps the only real wrong that his grandfather had done him was in leaving him four hundred a year. He could have made enough to make a good fight for it, if he had been obliged. It was his courage that saved him in the end, in the long, long last, as we shall come to see. But not until he had been smitten through and through with a sense of the falsity of his own perceptions. He had always served himself, and he had believed, like a great European sovereign, that he had always served a great ideal. The higher knowledge could not come to Alan until a woman had shown a greater faith than she knew herself to possess. It is said that no man can reclaim his brother, and that he must let that alone for ever. Yet

faith and hope and love are the creative gifts. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own life? says the Revised Version.

III

It is a truth not yet turned into a truism that life comes to people at the moment when they are ripe for it. We begin to be ripe when we realise that our dreams must be fulfilled in everything we do. Castles in the air that are projected into the future never fulfil themselves; they are without foundations. Castles in the air that are projected and realised before the evening are like the houses of coral insects. Nothing seems to be accomplished at daily set of sun, but passing strangers ask for the secret of the magic. Use your imagination for every day is the only formula the builder has to give.

This was the lesson which Colonel Leigh impressed on his daughter when he saw that she was imaginative: "use your imagination for every day's work." Madeleine Leigh had plenty of time to think and use her imagination during those six months which came to her after she left the schoolroom, before anybody treated her as quite grown-up. She thought it all round; she did most of her thinking lying flat on the top of the haystack. If she could get away so far as the haystack, which stood at the further end of the hayfield, there was a reasonable chance that she would not be wanted. People, even children, who

are bent on living generally manage to "find themselves" in their own surroundings. Life fits into their corners, and, if they respond to it, it grows ever closer till it absorbs them into itself.

Madeleine's chief thoughts lay round the problem of what she was to do now she was quite grown-up. It was settled for Helen, her elder sister; she had the house to manage and the bills to pay. Madeleine was doubtful whether there could or could not be anything that she herself was good at. Helen would marry; Helen had received, she knew, three proposals only last year. Madeleine, who came next to her in age, was her confidant in this and in other things. But Helen was the beauty, the acknowledged beauty, not only of the family but of the neighbourhood. As for her own good looks, Madeleine believed on the opinion of her looking-glass and of her family that she did not possess any. She thought privately, though of course she never admitted this to any one, that she was rather common-looking. She got so red and hot, like the village girls when they all met together for the Sunday-school treat. She was no good at music; in 1895 accomplishments were still expected of young ladies. She might marry, but she felt doubtful of her power to manage either a household or a husband, and husbands seemed to require managing. Then, again, nobody might ask her. They once had had a fat, blousy cook whom the boys insisted on calling "Madeleine." No, if marriage depended on looks it was no use

turning her thoughts in that direction. But there must be something somewhere for her to do, and there must be some way of learning how to do it. She talked to her father, who dropped the hint about castle-building every day. Colonel Gordon Leigh was almost afraid of being too much with her at this time. He wanted her to develop on her own lines, and wished he had his wife there to help him. He prayed a good deal for his favourite and youngest daughter, and his manner of praying was painstaking and original. He collected all his perplexities and ideas, and thought them out over again upon his knees. It took a long time, but he did not grudge the time ; he was never a shirker, but accustomed to hard work, and had put it to the proof for fifty-seven years.

During those six months Madeleine was instructed by her elder sister in several small important things, such as doing her hair properly, choosing her clothes, and managing her allowance. She told her dog at one time that Helen believed that life consisted in buying good things instead of cheap ones, keeping your things tidy, and paying bills promptly. She wanted something else, but, in spite of that, and in spite of an occasional outburst to the dog, she lived a very happy life upon the whole. She spent a good deal of time dreaming on the haystack, and did anything that people asked her. She went on with her music and her German, she went out riding with her father, and "culti-

vated her garden." She had plenty of time for reading: novels, books of biography, and short stories of the Imperial type disappeared into the haystack. She was a keen Imperialist; the Empire and the Church were the natural objects of her potential loyalty.

It was one of those things which look like accident that Madeleine Leigh had that six months' leisure for reading, dreaming, thinking before her first ball. The County Ball was in the spring; if you did not come out at the Christmas dances you had to wait for the County Ball. That was, on the whole, the proper thing to do; it made it possible to be presented first. It was not necessary really for Madeleine to be presented, but her sister had decided that it was. Helen was almost morbidly anxious to omit nothing that could be Madeleine's due.

The Drawing-room was in February; then there was a pause till April, in order that Lent might be properly observed. All these details have a great deal to do with the character, and therefore the destiny, of Madeleine Leigh. No one could have thought out so strange a mixture of discipline and freedom, though they had tried for centuries.

The County Ball at Milsom was noted that year for the thunder-storm which burst just as it began. The afternoon had been oppressive; the heavy expectation of thunder deepened as the night drew on. It culminated about nine o'clock

in the evening, just as the carriages drew up at the old Town Hall.

Within the ballroom people were noticing how the stillness intensified every sound. The tuning of instruments, the rustle of skirts on the stairs, were sounds almost fantastically exaggerated. Mrs. John Carnmoney, the wife of the chief steward, noted this to a stranger as she stood and waited. His name was Alan McQuoid; somebody had brought him and handed him over to her to be introduced. "It sounds like a whole army of Amazons approaching," she said with a laugh and one of her bright smiles.

"What we should call in the Highlands the army of Caillachs, I am afraid." He spoke with a slight drawl.

"Oh, are you one of the McQuoids of Areverga?" she said. "We are so much interested in the place. My husband has taken it for several years. The McQuoid is a minor, as you know, of course."

"The McQuoid is not a minor; the laird is a minor, but Areverga does not happen to be The McQuoid."

Although his voice did not lose its drawl, her quick ear detected the sound of distant thunder. He banished it immediately and went on to congratulate her on the musicians she had secured.

"Glad you've got Ruboni."

"I heard him the other day; he is almost unknown at present, but I think he is going to

make his mark. There is something so original about his music. He gives one something to think about as well as to do."

By the time The McQuoid had finished his sentence Mrs. Carnmoney, who was nothing if not social, had recovered from the shock that her own mistake had given her. She went on chatting, studying the man beside her without looking at him, as is the manner of her kind. She began to be interested, none the less because he was The McQuoid and not the laird of Areverga. What was his history? She remembered some story of a family quarrel; she could not think about it now. People were arriving; Mrs. Carnmoney began greeting her friends in turn. She did it easily, saying something to every one, and calling all the girls by their Christian names. "Is this really you, Joyce? How perfectly splendid of you to come all the way from Clutchworth." "Ah, my dear," turning to another, "I was so sorry to miss your mother yesterday when she called." "Good evening, Colonel Leigh, you've brought both the girls at last. Madeleine ought to have been out six months ago. Come and stand near me, Madeleine, I'll find you plenty of partners. Let me introduce you to The McQuoid."

Madeleine was dressed in white with a star stone pendant, which she had insisted on wearing, set in diamonds. She bowed, but did not say anything, for a tremendous clap of thunder was followed by a rushing torrent of falling rain.

"Very peculiar weather this, isn't it?" shouted Alan McQuoid. Madeleine, who thought that he had asked her for a dance, handed her programme; he wrote his name down twice. He had come to the dance for the purpose of enjoying himself; this little girl would be an easy conquest. He tried another remark as he gave her back her programme; but she managed to show him by a gesture that talking was unnecessary in such an uproar. He was looking at her with wide startled eyes into which a look of amusement crept. Every one else was shouting to their partners. Madeleine had decided that it was not necessary. Following the precedent that she set, he bowed in silence, offered her his arm and invited her to dance immediately. But Mrs. Carnmoney, who was a splendid hostess, whispered to her not to go away just yet. That was the typical mistake of a *débutante*, to disappear with the first man that asked her.

It was not until the torrent of rain ceased that Ruboni's music could be fully felt and heard. "If it were not for the terrible morbidity of the age he would not dare to play such music," Mrs. Carnmoney exclaimed. She looked in his direction as though debating whether or no to say anything, and then shrugged her shoulders. She was tall, handsome, sociable, and well-dressed; in fact an ideal member's wife. There was something out of keeping with such a hostess in the strains which floated suddenly across the ballroom. It was not their wildness—wildness

of a sort had long been legitimate in ballroom music—but this was gloomy, distressing, weird, full of a vague spirit of unrest, also of a suggestion of coming evil.

In 1895 people were willing to forgive a good deal to those who delivered them from boredom. Madeleine liked the music, Mrs. Carnmoney was slightly puzzled and wondered what it meant. By this time several couples were standing round the room, ready and waiting to begin.

“Is this your first dance?” Before she could answer the music had changed, with an abruptness that was violent, into a maddening and seductive waltz. Every one moved forward, impelled, as it were, both by reaction and relief.

The ball had started with a swing and zest which seemed specially appropriate in the old Town Hall.

McQuoid and Madeleine were among the first dancers to swing out in obedience to the summons of the music. The girl had often maintained that a Scotchman danced better than any one, and she silently reaffirmed it. There was a stateliness, but there was also a passion and verve about McQuoid's every movement. He was a very handsome man ; his dark-red hair went well with his colouring and large dark eyes. The expression in his eyes changed frequently. In repose it was uncertain ; it could be passionate, pleading, eloquent, as Madeleine discovered. It gained an unusual fulness of satisfaction,

while his limbs moved rhythmically in obedience to the music. They danced unceasingly from the first beat of the instruments until the last.

"Who is that dancing with my little girl?" Colonel Leigh asked of Mrs. Carnmoney as they passed.

She looked round before she replied; she really had introduced a good many men to the Colonel's daughter.

"Alan McQuoid. He comes from South Africa and is going back again; he may be away for years."

"That's all right," replied the Colonel heartily, and after a dance or two he watched no more. He entered the card-room and played a game of whist; he was old enough to resist the onward march of bridge.

As the couples streamed out of the room Madeleine hazarded a remark about dancing in South Africa. This provoked a reply which led to another question, and so to a good deal of conversation. When he claimed the next dance he did not hesitate to resume the conversation where it had stopped before. The girl was so full of the thought of South Africa that she talked about it to another partner. She was fortunate in finding another who had been there recently, although only as a visitor. This man had recently returned from India by the Cape. He had stayed and gone up-country, but, as he admitted, he had nothing to offer her but first

impressions; yet those first impressions were clear and vivid.

"The trouble about the country was, in his eyes, that it was so big; it had not yet found itself. It would not, either; it could have no real life while the present government continued in the Transvaal." Madeleine pondered over these words so much that she repeated them the next time time that she danced with The McQuoid.

He laughed and made no difficulty whatever of explaining the situation in the Transvaal. Madeleine listened and asked eager questions; he dealt with a moving drama, and his speech was eloquent. He went on to invent and modify his own ideas of perfect and righteous government. He may not have deliberately intended to deceive her, but his talking left the impression of a man who spent his time labouring to right his people's wrongs. It happened naturally enough; he spent a good deal of time and strength in brooding over a real injury. The injury on which he meditated was entirely personal, and he confounded his anger against that with his indignation against the wrongs of the Transvaal. A thing which most men would account a grievous wrong had been done to the man himself in his early youth; he was five-and-twenty, but he had not forgotten it.

Every one who knows the Town Hall at Milsom will remember the gallery commanding a view of the ballroom. Half-way up the stairs,

on the way to the gallery, is a sheltered corner where these two sat and talked. He was a passionate, ambitious man, with a great belief in himself and his own future, and accustomed to gratify his own desires. Madeleine was ambitious and inexperienced, with a great deal of strong, untested idealism, full of the belief, which Rudyard Kipling had fostered, of the part which Englishmen were to play throughout the world. Alan saw it and understood; he desired nothing just then so much as to make this woman care for him. He would have to go back to South Africa before long; but he cared nothing for the consequences for her or for himself. In her eager questionings she showed him the part that she expected him to play, and for the time he played it. He was like a clever actor who has never thought very deeply about his Romeo or his Hamlet, but finds himself suddenly confronted with an audience taking the drama seriously, and accustomed to great acting. He may, if he be sensitive enough to realise what is asked of him, rise to the level of a great occasion. He will even be a different and better man for the time in proportion to the sincerity of his acting. If he were to continue on such a level his life would be transformed; he would not be very likely to continue. But Alan McQuoid was a man in whom many elements were struggling for the upper hand. He was ambitious, he was anxious to make money, but by a strange paradox he believed in dreams. The men of South Africa

did believe in them in the days of the full glory of Cecil Rhodes's career. They discoursed for some time with great interest on such deep and serious subjects as education in the Transvaal. Madeleine listened devoutly; her face lit up when she was talking earnestly; and earnestness is attractive.

A fortnight later Alan was tramping the deck of an ocean-going steamer bound for Cape Town. He had not seen Madeleine since the night of the ball, but he had read some news about her in *The Morning Post*. Her sister was engaged to Captain William Imes. This caused Alan to think furiously, and there is plenty of time for thought upon a three weeks' voyage. He had often heard that lovemaking was infectious, engagements followed hard upon each other in a family. After a day or two Alan had invented an excellent reason for writing to Madeleine Leigh. He felt that it needed some formal, stately, almost official reason for writing to her at all.

Alan turned the letter over in his head for a day or two and then wrote it down. The subject that he chose was education in the Transvaal. He had collected some statistics from a fellow-passenger; he wrote that he saw that she was interested, and it was most important to influence public opinion at home. His statistics proved that the taxes were unjust, but the fate of the children mattered more than the money: they were growing up in black ignorance

and crime. He ended by venturing to send his best wishes for Miss Helen Leigh's future happiness. He signed himself, Hers sincerely, The McQuoid. After that silence settled down between the two for the next four years.

CHAPTER I

ALAN McQUOID, like almost all men who have lived in the wilds, believed in destiny. Nothing confirmed this belief more than his second meeting with Madeleine Leigh. It was entirely undesigned on his part.

Alan McQuoid went back to South Africa, and was installed as agent of the Tiefgrad Mine. He returned to England, after an absence of four years, in 1899. He could not have known, four years before, that that year would see the beginning of the Boer War. But he knew, of course, that it was the year in which Dugold McQuoid would come of age. He had always told himself that he would go to Scotland and see Areverga before it passed into his uncle's hands.

The very day after he landed in England Alan felt the Fates begin to pull the strings. He took up *The Field*, saw that the fishing at the old castle was advertised to be let. It was very cheap, extraordinarily cheap for such good fishing within such easy reach of London. There was no "lodge," but there was an inn which would suit Alan very much better than a lodge. He put

down the paper, and walked about by himself a good bit that day. Some inward instinct warned him that he was in for a big thing if he took that fishing.

It is always suddenly, and almost always without foreknowledge, that the big things happen. Alan was standing about in the hall of the hotel at Areverga, having an idle afternoon. Because he was idle, he began turning the pages of the visitors' book on the hall table. Then suddenly the world was changed, the lightning flashed from one end of heaven to the other.

COLONEL AND MISS LEIGH,

Double Haw,

Surrey.

It was written in a feminine handwriting, round, but with all the letters clearly formed. It was the writing of a woman who placed no very great reliance on herself, and finished her work carefully.

All the afternoon, until nearly sunset, Alan McQuoid tramped about the moors. It was getting late when he met a lady with whom he had exchanged some civilities in the hotel. She was a Miss Musgrave, and was travelling with her aunt, a quiet, elderly woman from Devonshire. Brenda Musgrave was small and rather plain, with no particular coloured hair and nondescript features. Nevertheless, Alan McQuoid liked her, chiefly, perhaps, because she was a very good

listener. She was only nineteen, and if she ventured a remark she usually came out with some half-childish confidence. That evening she told him that she had been calling at the castle, and asked him whether he were going to the garden-party. Then she added :

"We had an introduction to Mrs. Carnmoney, but I wouldn't let my aunt use it. You see, I was dying to go to the garden-party, and I was afraid it would look like fishing for an invitation."

"But you have got to know them now?" Alan asked with some amusement.

"Yes. Of course, Mrs. Carnmoney heard that we were here, and came to call. Aunt and I had engaged the big landau, so we can give you a lift if you had thought of going."

Alan thanked her, but said it was very doubtful if he could make up his mind to go. "Are many people going from the hotel?"

"I don't think any one else is asked," she replied with dignity, adding that she had met those new people who had arrived two days ago at the castle that afternoon. "It is quite likely they may be going," she added.

"Colonel and Miss Leigh?" Alan spoke hastily, and added that he had seen the names in the hotel book.

"Well, you've got it right, anyway. She is good-looking; she's rather what the people call a bonnie lass." She spoke a little wistfully. There are some women who possess hardly any faults save the habit of depreciating themselves.

When the day of the garden-party arrived Alan McQuoid walked across the moor alone.

The castle lay in a hollow among the hills, which crowded up against it steeply on three sides. A carriage drive swept up to the door with the limited stateliness which the space allowed. The path across the moor led to a turnstile, and then descended abruptly to the castle door. The turnstile marked the boundary of the castle garden. McQuoid hesitated, then he turned aside, left the turnstile on his left, and entered the drive. This involved a detour of several hundred yards. It was by the turnstile that he and his father had stood the only time that he had seen his grandfather.

John Carnmoney, who had rented the castle for the last ten years, was standing by the door, giving a welcome to all his guests in turn. Standing as he did upon the hall steps, he naturally looked as though the place belonged to him.

"How do you do, McQuoid? Are you a man of taste? My wife has got some good music in the hall."

Alan replied to his host's greeting with a civil word or two, and passed on into the building.

The inner hall, which was the living-room of the castle, was separated from the outer by two swing doors. McQuoid drew himself up with a movement not quite unconscious as he passed through them.

"He holds himself well, and he's six foot three if he's an inch," said Carnmoney meditatively.

"They say the other is something like a cripple, if not deformed," replied a friend and neighbour.

"He's nothing of the sort," came the answer promptly. "He's not a giant like this fellow, but there's nothing wrong with him. He came to stay here in July last."

"And is it true you're leaving us?"

"Yes, I suppose so. He wants to come here when he comes of age in November; and he's right, of course. But all sorts of things may happen before November next."

McQuoid, as he passed into the hall, saw the lady whom he sought at the other end. Sitting there, close to an open window, against the oak pillars which supported the music-gallery, she fulfilled the description of a "bonnie lassie." She was dressed in white; he did not quite know what the dress was made of, he thought it was lace and muslin. She had a large hat on, and a black velvet ribbon about the throat accentuated its roundness. The hall was long and narrow and rather gloomy, although it had long been the living-room of the castle. Most of the light came from Madeleine's window, and behind her was a view of both moor and loch.

"How do you do, Miss Leigh? I don't know if you remember me, but we met at a ball just four years ago."

The smile with which she had been listening

to the music was still in her eyes as she turned round.

"Of course, I remember we met at a ball, and then again at the spring race-meeting; one meets so many people at the spring meeting—more, I think, then than in the summer even."

They chatted a little about the ball, and Alan reminded her of Ruboni's music.

"This same Prognostico. I hear it's become very fashionable since; it's even penetrated to South Africa."

"What, this music at a dance? Why, I believe you're right; it's coming back to me since you mentioned it. The chief thing that I remember about the dance was the tremendous thunder-storm with which it opened. There is thunder in the air this afternoon too."

McQuoid, who had not thought of it during his walk, saw that she was right as he glanced out over the hills.

"Ruboni is a genius," the girl continued; "he knows quite well that the air needs a thundery setting."

Alan stood there, listening to the soft laughter in her voice. He was satisfying, with slow and cautious sips, the hunger and thirst of the last four years. He was glad she remembered so many details of their last meeting; but she acknowledged them with so much frankness that there was nothing to be learnt from the admission. More than half the charm of Madeleine's sweetness lay in her frankness to young and old alike.

People thought there must be much concealed, since she had no need to pretend mysteries.

Another reason was that Madeleine was happy, radiantly happy, and all who saw her felt it. Her life alone with her father at Double Haw was varied by visits from the brother at Sandhurst. She had grieved to lose Helen when Helen had married, but she wrote to her regularly and took rides with her father, and gave her orders happily in the house and garden. The little girl who used to lie upon the haystack wondering what was to become of her had found her métier.

They were interrupted by Colonel Leigh; he had found out who Alan was, and had a good deal to say to him.

"How do you do, McQuoid? I used to know your father. Wonderful man your father, wonderful billiard player; he used to win all our money at billiards, and then lose it again at poker—wanted to give the rest of us a chance, you know. By the bye, I hear you have just come from the Transvaal. Interesting place the Transvaal; seen anything of Oom Paul?"

"I left Johannesburg just six weeks ago, and had a long talk with old Kruger the day before I left. . . . We shall have to fight him or leave the country."

Any one who could talk with real knowledge of Johannesburg was eagerly listened to in 1899. Alan began to talk, and took the trouble to talk well in order to gratify Madeleine Leigh's father. But Madeleine also listened, and presently he

began to tell an anecdote which illustrated his point. Three women and one man who happened to be standing within earshot drew a little nearer. One of the women asked a question, and that was followed by a remark from a man who disagreed. The McQuoid replied, maintaining his point, and enforcing it by another anecdote. He was talking still in his ordinary voice, but somehow it happened to be a voice that carried. Quite a little crowd had gathered round to listen. Mrs. Carnmoney took the opportunity of hurrying the musicians away for some refreshment.

Alan did not have it all his own way. There were some in the room who had been out there, and argued points with him, usually pleading for some recognised belief or theory. Alan disagreed with all the accepted theories. The difference of opinion gave the effect of strength. A man who rides into the ring and throws his glove down wins a certain amount of sympathy. There is the note of challenge in his outlook upon life; Madeleine did not dislike a challenge. They two had had some talk at their last and only meeting about the great things Alan would accomplish in South Africa.

Alan stopped his talk when Ruboni returned and began elaborating his strange, mysterious music. It was the Prognostico, but so changed and hidden by new variations that every one failed to recognise it. Then slowly the weird, taking burden of the air made itself felt throughout the room. No more talking was possible;

people resented the musician's message, it made them feel and think. It was not merely the wildness—wildness of a sort that has long been familiar in drawing-room music—but this was full of a terrible unhappiness, a strange prognostication of coming evil. Madeleine looked at her father anxiously, knowing that he was sensitive to music. McQuoid, understanding her anxiety, looked as though he could have murdered the musician. It was not merely enchanting, people were bound to stand and listen, whether they would or no. The air had begun slowly, but it stopped abruptly, and that without the will of the conductor. He was gathering together all the hints and suggestions of the different variations in one tremendous passage. That passage was poignant, full of life and vigour and courage, as well as suffering and humiliation. People felt that the secret was to be made known at last. But it never was made known. The thunder-shower which preluded the approach of a long and heavy storm burst with a tremendous thunder-clap. A large Scotch fir standing within sight of the hall windows was struck from top to bottom.

Alan McQuoid was one of the men who came to see the Leighs into their carriage. The Colonel turned to speak to him as he closed the door.

"We shall see you again, McQuoid. Staying at the inn, did you say? Come and smoke a pipe with me upstairs one evening. Always have a

private sitting-room when my daughter's with me."

Half an hour later, when he was alone in the Carnmoneys' drawing-room, and the family had gone upstairs, Alan pondered over the last sentence. He knew as well as if he had been told that Colonel Leigh was anything but a rich man. But a man who is not rich, and takes a private sitting-room because his daughter is with him, would be particular about other things. McQuoid walked about a little as he waited, thinking of facts and chances that were or that might be, both known and unknown. He wondered whether the Colonel, with his restless, ardent temperament, were likely to be called abroad. Then the family came in, and they all passed a merry evening together till the sky had cleared.

The young man's thoughts were very chequered as he walked homeward. The thought of Madeleine's face, the memory of her words, had often haunted him in the last four years. Now he had found her, and he had managed better than he expected that first afternoon. But they had been rough years; he wished unfeignedly that he had seen more of her before he had lived through them. There were one or two incidents, certainly—not many, of course, but just one or two—that he would gladly have expunged from the record had it been possible. They had not been worth while, that was the worst of it, the stake had never rewarded the game that he had played.

Yet there had never seemed any reason why he should not take the shortest cut to the fulfilment of his own desires.

The reasons began to loom plain and large as he walked home through the eerie stillness of the night.

CHAPTER II

AT lunch next day Madeleine led her father to tell his version of the McQuoid quarrel. She had never heard the rights of it. The Carnmoneys had always taken for granted that she knew. She might easily have drawn John on the subject, but his friends never asked him for a story if they could help it. He took too long about it, he introduced matter which amused him or crossed his mind at the time, but which did not bear upon the subject in the least. Colonel Leigh, though he was more difficult to draw, could give a vivid and very human narrative. If he digressed, his digression threw light on the story itself, or on some side-issue of it, which it was abundantly worth while to illustrate. He could be relied upon as a general rule—in short, unless his prejudices interfered—to give an impartial summing-up of the whole. Madeleine, however, had no reason to suppose that he had any personal feeling in connection with the McQuoids. She was surprised at the reluctance with which he began his tale.

"It's a very simple affair," he said at length : "the story of a quarrel between father and son—there are hundreds like it in every book of family chronicles. People said that they quarrelled about the son's marriage, but they had quarrelled all their lives ; that was the culminating point. Old Dugald McQuoid, the 'old laird' as they called him (this man's grandfather), was forty when he married, getting on for fifty when he had a son. That was the beginning of all the trouble. He might have married earlier, but he was selfish, and his selfishness was protected by a superstition. He thought that the Lord had promised that a son should not be wanting to his house for ever. Anyhow, he married late, and had a son when he ought to have been thinking about a grandson. That was the reason why they never understood each other, for they had virtually missed out a generation. It is in the middle generation that the changes happen. Of course things went wrong ; people always suffer for playing tricks with their lives in this fashion. Why can't people accept the natural responsibilities ? . . ."

After that there was a silence : the Colonel sat still devouring the wrath which the subject roused in him. It was one of his hobbies, and his daughter knew it. A brave and warm-hearted man himself, accepting responsibility as part of a man's burden, he detested the fashion of late marriages and small families. Madeleine went on with her lunch in silence, and then, presently,

got up and filled his glass for him. He always drank a particular kind of mineral water and the maid had a habit of leaving it out of reach.

"Thank you. I think they disagreed first of all on the subject of Alan's schooling. I mean the elder Alan, not this fellow. He wanted to go to a public school in England with all the other boys of his age and standing, the sons of all the other lairds in the neighbourhood.

"The father wouldn't hear of it; the village school had been good enough for him and was good enough for his son. Then, rather late, when Alan was nineteen, he sent him to Oxford as a sort of compensation. We were at the same college, and saw a good deal of each other, for he also was an army candidate at the time, though he didn't stick to it, of course. I believe in Oxford, as you know, my dear, but I'm not sure that it wasn't a mistake in his case; there seemed to be a fate against everything that the laird did, or did not do, as regards his son."

"Why was it a mistake, father?"

"Alan came up determined to do everything, as he himself told me, not in the way of work, but in the way of everything else.

"Well, he hadn't money enough to begin with, and he hadn't the knowledge how to do it properly; with the least amount of damage to himself and every one else. He made a big fool of himself, of course, but there was always something about him that one liked. If there hadn't been, if he had been merely stupid and—brutish,

he wouldn't have had so many friends. But he would have been far less likely to have quarrelled with his father, or to have married La Venétienne. She was an actress, a fair Venetian ; that fellow has inherited her wonderful red hair. Everybody calls it Scotch on him. We boys all raved about her ; just for the moment she was the one woman in the world for all of us. It was, I believe, that, as much as anything else, which made McQuoid determined to make her his wife. He had, somewhere at the back of his mind, an uneasy feeling of inferiority, because he had not been to a public school. He thought if he married where we all admired he could wipe that imaginary stain away for ever. That, my dear, was, I believe, the true inner history of the whole affair ; the psychology of it, as people say nowadays. That doesn't mean, and I don't wish it to, that he wasn't in love with her, for he was, of course. And his love deepened after he took her to South Africa. That's a curious country ; it appeals to people with strange promises and throws them back upon themselves. They lose or find themselves for good and all in it."

The last words were growled out in his deepest tones, for South Africa was much in his thoughts just then. Six months ago he had been retired ; there was no reason for keeping him on just then, for nobody believed that war was coming. In March he had seen it looming on the horizon ; now the war-cloud had reached up to the zenith.

Colonel Leigh was wearing glasses ; he had

taken to them lately, the first sign of coming age, save his grizzled hair. There was another sign, just then, a half suggestion of a man who is fighting with the odds against him; yet his trouble was solely due to his sense of honour, his pride, his ambition, and his loyal patriotism.

Madeleine spoke with quiet detachment, like one not passionately interested in the question that she was putting.

"Were they happy together, father? I know it led to trouble with the laird, but were they happy in spite of everything?"

"I don't know, my dear; they were very fond of each other, but the trouble with the laird was always in the background. Alan wasn't man enough to fight his own scruples; that was her view of the case, the only time she spoke to me about it. They say, Madeleine, that no McQuoid has ever yet made a woman happy."

Again the Colonel warmed to the story that he was telling.

"It's an unjust thing for a man to cut off his son suddenly from the property he has been brought up to expect. The real difficulty was that Alan was a coward, afraid to face his father; afraid to tell him the truth, but not afraid to be continually quarrelling with him. His wife wasn't a bad woman; she was really in love with Alan, and had her good points, but she had precious little principle. I doubt if there was anything short of actual crime that she would have stopped at in order to marry Alan.

"The worst thing about her was her unrestrained, unguarded passion against her father-in-law. I've seen her give way to it before her son; there was something horrible in seeing a woman so unrestrained. I told her that she might as well bring the boy up on gin or slow poison as teach him to think like that. She knew quite well what I meant; she opened her large eyes and looked at me: I shall never forget that moment. It was then that it flashed across me that she was dying. I persuaded Alan to send for a doctor, who said it was consumption, and left me to decide whether or no to tell the husband. Twenty years ago it was considered fatal: no one had heard of the open-air cure; Koch's remedy was still unknown. I told McQuoid, of course, but he looked as though he had received his death-blow, and later he would hardly speak to me. He never forgave me. He shared his father's vindictiveness in a petulant, undecided way."

Madeleine never liked her father better than when he thought his thoughts aloud in this fashion. She loved him at all times, and would have gone on loving him if he had died, or gone away for many years; or if he had been stricken down, helpless, paralysed, dependent, with all his personality blasted into nothingness. But she liked him and enjoyed his company the most when he talked freely out of his inmost thoughts. She let him ruminate for a minute, and then with a question she recalled him to the main thread of

the narrative ; unconsciously he had skipped over several years.

“ How did the quarrel come to a head ? ”

The Colonel had pushed his chair back from the table, and begun to cross his legs while he talked. Now he uncrossed them and drew a little nearer. For the last ten minutes the lunch had been forgotten, but the strain upon his feelings had made the Colonel hungry. He went on eating rapidly as he continued his story.

“ I’ve told you, over the question of the marriage,” he answered testily. “ McQuoid always was a fool. He made a great mistake, his wife encouraged it, and she was a shrewd woman as a rule ; but she was wrong on this occasion. Alan was a coward, and at crucial moments a coward is apt to take the wrong turning. He is afraid of something unseen at the end of the passage. They waited first for the birth of the boy, intending to win the laird’s heart by presenting him with an heir. It wasn’t a bad idea. The old man was seventy, more than seventy, and the succession was his fetish. It was part of his religion ; but I’ve noticed that when hatred is also part of a man’s religion it is usually the strongest part. The laird’s religion included a hatred of Roman Catholics, and of everything connected with the stage. Madeleine, when you marry, don’t marry a poacher, I mean a fellow who bags his neighbour’s pheasants ; or a man who cheats at cards ; any religion that you fancy.”

She nodded and laughed. "The poacher is taboo, but I can't make any rash promises against card sharpers. It must take a good deal of nerve to do it nowadays, if you come to think of it."

He looked at her, amused, and went on talking. "In the end, of course, they went abroad without telling him; thought they would wait till the boy was older, and while they were away the laird heard of it for himself. They might have known that that was what would happen. He didn't write until they returned to England, which they did six years later, when the boy was seven. Dugald had been nourishing his anger all those years. Alan wrote to him from the ship; the letter crossed another from his father demanding to know the truth, hinting that he would not believe any denial of the story, yet clearly longing to have it denied. By way of answer Alan made up his mind to go and see his father, taking his son with him. He hoped great things from the meeting; the child was unusually handsome and well grown, and then he, too, was the only grandson. If Dugald could have forgiven his son just then they would have lived together until they died in peace; he would have died a happy man.

"Forgive and ye shall be forgiven. People talk as though that was a moral precept invented by the priests. It is a law or principle, one of the deepest principles in nature; just like water finding its own level, or anything of that sort."

His daughter looked up, her face ablaze with light.

"You mean that if we will not forgive others, God Himself cannot set us free."

"Something of that. There are stories of the laird walking up and down the night before the meeting."

"What did he do in the end?"

"I believe he waited irresolute until he heard a rumour that they were coming, and then he went out to meet them by the turnstile. Then they didn't come—it is curious how rumour flies in the Highlands; he had to wait a couple of hours, and waiting seldom strengthens either nerves or temper. None was present at the meeting, but Alan told me that he tried to keep cool as long as it was possible. The laird tried to make terms, to get hold of the boy, the chief condition being, of course, that the child was not to see his mother. Then something must have happened. Tradition has it that the old man set the dog on to the child; more likely that the brute made for him without orders from his master. If my poor friend had known how to act he would have called the dog off, and displayed the boy's courage, which at all times was very much greater than his own. Instead, he raised his stick, intending, of course, to hit the dog, but brought it down on the old man's arm. Both must have said things in their anger that pride would not let them unsay afterwards. After that they separated. Alan told me the story once, once only; it was said that neither of them ever spoke of it again. The next thing that we heard was that the laird had been

married, almost immediately, to one of his tenant's daughters. He had no resource left but to throw himself back on his belief in Providence, and pray for another son.

"They say the extemporaneous petitions that he raised at family prayers frightened all who heard them. Three or four years later another boy was born to him, then he waxed eloquent over his intimacy with the Almighty. It was horrible; he claimed to know all the divine counsels, for I went there once on a fool's errand to see if anything could be done for Alan. I arrived at the wrong time, just as the child was born. The Almighty knows what's best, but we had all hoped that if there was a baby it might be a girl."

"It *ought* to have been a girl," said Madeleine decidedly, at which he laughed shortly, and then he got up and went on to the balcony, which led by a staircase down into the garden. He stood there outlined against the sky and heather, muttering to himself, half aloud, half softly.

"The Almighty *does* know best, but it takes a long while, a very long while sometimes, to understand His methods."

"The mills grind slowly; they grind exceeding small."

Madeleine, as she followed him onto the balcony, felt a little unhappy about him, as she often did. She wondered what would be the outcome of all this on the man whose life had crossed hers so strangely.

CHAPTER III

THE Colonel had renewed his invitation to Alan to come and smoke a pipe in his room upstairs. It was about nine o'clock one evening when he made his way leisurely to the Colonel's sitting-room. Madeleine was sitting close to a coffee-pot with some embroidery near; Colonel Leigh was smoking. Alan accepted the coffee which Madeleine poured out. Then he began to talk leisurely and tentatively, giving every one plenty of chance to interrupt. He said, for instance, that there was a rumour in the glen that Mackay of Ochriall had killed a fourteen-pointer! "Over away at Corrie-beg?" asked the Colonel. "Strange the speed with which news travels in the Highlands. Do you play picquet, McQuoid?" he asked after a moment. They played for an hour, while Madeleine sat and worked, or glanced through the papers and the evening post.

They played in silence, broken by the Colonel, who put the usual questions in his full bass voice.

"Quint of fives any good? Good, thank you.

Fourteen kings? My dear fellow, they must be; I've got two aces in my own hand."

The other answered chiefly by signs and gestures; every now and again by a single word. When the game was over McQuoid sat chatting for a few moments before getting up to leave them. He made both the father and the daughter understand that he had enjoyed his evening without putting it into words. Instead he told them of a trick he had learnt for tackling a difficult hole upon the golf-course.

"You begin with an iron-shot, so as not to go too far, and if that lands you right, then you can use your brassie; a good brassie shot brings you right on to the green."

"Yes, but I always overdo that sort of thing," said the Colonel, who enjoyed discussing his private difficulties. Alan, however, did not intend to let him get his head in the matter of golf gossip. He changed the conversation by turning to Madeleine and asking if she saw much of the Carnmoneys.

"The children are great friends of mine," she answered brightly. "I am going over to lunch there to-morrow."

It turned out that Alan was also going over to lunch. Could he be of any use in the way of escort? "It's a lovely walk—not more than three miles—but rather lonely for a lady by herself."

Madeleine thought for a moment before she answered. "I had thought of walking back," she

said brightly; "it makes one so independent. Father will drive me there in the morning."

"I hope you will let me show you the portraits of my grandfather and of another ancestor," he answered. "Colonel, I suppose you have heard that two more regiments are under orders to be in readiness for South Africa?"

The Colonel was thoughtful for some little time after McQuoid left; he puffed a pipe slowly.

"I wonder," he said at length, "if that fellow plays golf too well to care about a round with me?"

When Mrs. Carnmoney was not over-anxious about the success of a party she was a charming woman. Alan found her so as he sat by her side next day at the head of her long table. She talked delightfully; she told him how fond they were of the old place, and asked if he would care to see the changes.

She showed a frank feminine interest in his affairs, and asked about his plans in a way that invited confidence. He answered readily, talking politics in the Transvaal easily, and telling more of his good stories. He told her a few personal things, letting them drop casually but distinctly; Madeleine knew that he was telling them to herself. He gave her, for instance, the impression of a man very near to recklessness, but smiling at it quietly. He might be a ruined man, but his fortunes were assured if the war came quickly and ended speedily.

Madeleine was startled by the quietness with

which he spoke of his own troubles and of the inevitableness of the coming war. Yet he took it much more seriously than any one else of the many whom she had heard speak about the matter. People in Surrey talked of it very much as they did of the Indian frontier expeditions. She made up her mind that she would get more about the matter out of Alan on the homeward walk.

When lunch was over Madeleine went upstairs with Mrs. Carnmoney to the latter's bedroom. Mamie Carnmoney was fifteen years her senior, but they had always called each other by their Christian names. They chatted of many little things together, such as love, friendship, fashion, and philosophy.

"How did you get to know The McQuoid?" asked Madeleine, settling down into an easy chair.

"I sent John to call on him—he used to work for John's brother, you know: it was only civil under the circumstances—and then asked him to the party. What do you make of him? I suppose you see a good deal of him at the inn. He seems nice, doesn't he?"

"No, we don't see much of him; I've formed no opinion on that subject as yet. When I have I'll give it you."

Something in the way in which she paused made the sentence sound less final than the words warranted.

"He's always in the background, but he's

always there," she added, summing up her inchoate reasoning.

Downstairs in the billiard-room Carnmoney believed that he was improving his acquaintance with McQuoid. He responded, of course, with a ready assent to the stranger's request that he might see the portraits presently. Then they began to play. The Scotchman played with his head, taking apparently very little trouble about the game at all. Once he amused himself by getting the balls together and doing a succession of nursery cannons. After that John laid down the cue and asked him where he had learnt his billiards.

"My father taught me," he answered laconically; "and between ourselves it's been useful in South Africa. You prosperous Englishmen don't know what it is to live upon your wits for many weeks together."

"This isn't amusing for either you or me," said John, when they had finished; "come out into the garden. I expect you have seen some queer dramatic life in South Africa, if the truth were known."

"Yes, it's true that life is dramatic, but on the whole it's very sordid drama."

While they talked Carnmoney tried to show this stranger, for whom he had a good deal of sympathy, that he would help him if he could. He led the conversation round to that other McQuoid who had been to stay with him in July. Alan admitted that he didn't know him, and

wasn't going to make any effort to do so. "Don't happen to fancy the part of poor relation."

There was nothing in the words; there was nothing that John could recall afterwards in the look or tone. But he had a vision at the moment of a glimpse of burning anger, a vision that he could not easily forget. It was only for a moment. If McQuoid hated his kinsman, normally, at any rate, he concealed his hatred. He did not pretend any affection; no one would have believed in it; he looked bored or amused when the name was mentioned. John Carnmoney wished that he had asked the men to meet each other without saying a single word.

Then the ladies came down and they went to meet them, and began talking about their plans for the afternoon.

"We wanted Madeleine to see more of the views, and meant to motor round the loch, and have a tea picnic; you can walk back from there—it's only five miles—or else we can bring you back here if you prefer it."

"Then we'll go and have a look at the portraits first," said John, and they went in procession to the picture-gallery.

Alan looked very much like the descendant of the McQuoids as he stood about among the pictures. He was a handsomer and better-built man than any of his ancestors, but unquestionably he belonged to them. Neither the features nor the colouring were the same; the differences were as striking as the likenesses. The hardness,

the undying sternness and vindictiveness of the Covenanters seemed to have come to life once more. But the fervour, the exaltation, and genius of the McQuoids had asserted themselves in their last descendant with a difference. "New wine has been poured into old bottles, if I'm not mistaken," thought Carnmoney to himself. He didn't say it out loud, for fear his wife should correct him and tell him he was quoting wrongly.

Alan said little; yet his presence gave reality to the pictures. It was Mrs. Carnmoney who chatted about them. The four or five chief portraits were hanging together at one end of the gallery. The windows were on the left; Alan stood away among the shadows on the right, listening eagerly and quietly.

"This is the picture that I wanted to show you," he said to Madeleine when there was a pause.

The portrait was that of a man with a maimed hand, and that hand was raised in blessing or imprecation. He was a young man, and there was mingled horror and exaltation in the eyes. He was a man who had known both agony and rapture and lived to tell the tale.

"Dieu et la main droite," the legend ran round the frame, but it might have been spoken by the portrait. The lips were resolute, although they were parted; the words which they uttered must be few and fit; the look of resolution had left its stamp alike upon the chin, the forehead, and the staring eyes.

"And this is my grandfather." Alan moved

across to the last portrait of all, the one nearest the window. He was an old man; his hand was resting on a turnstile; he looked as though he were waiting, watching, not impossibly, on guard against a foe. Pride answered to pride; Alan looked at him with an air of respect, as though establishing a relationship.

"He and I never knew each other. I often wish we had done so," he said to Madeleine, and then turned to Mrs. Carnmoney.

"We mustn't keep you waiting. I believe you have ordered the motor," he added with a touch of that Scotch courtesy which has its own peculiar stamp and grace. Madeleine had known that Alan fascinated and puzzled her, but she had never liked him so well before.

Alan was an actor, but to do him justice he never acted before Madeleine Leigh. He threw the last note of sincerity, earnestness into almost everything that he said and did. He not only wished to be, he became a better man when he was with her, for the time at least. The McQuoids had always had their limitations, but they had possessed a sense of power and the capacity for sacrifice. These things had their chance with Alan McQuoid at last.

The Carnmoneys had been right in thinking that Madeleine would choose to walk home after the picnic by the loch. She never thought about fatigue, or if she did she put the thought away from her as unimportant and foolish; but there was a new look of genuine anxiety on some one

else's account in Alan's eyes. He looked at her and he looked at the distance; the lie of the land enabled him to gauge the walk from where he stood with tolerable accuracy. He looked at the sun, and took out his watch; there were three good hours of daylight, no mistake about it.

"You are quite sure it won't tire you?" he asked at last, almost sharply, as though he were annoyed with her. That was one of the happiest and most perturbed moments that he had known for months and years. If he could, even at that moment, have allowed his destiny to assert itself! A man has two destinies, the one that he makes for himself out of his character, and the one that Providence intended for him.

"It's six o'clock, McQuoid; isn't it time you and Miss Leigh started, if you want to be back to dinner?"

Madeleine was playing hunt the slipper with the children; she struggled to her feet, reluctantly freeing herself from several small pairs of hands.

She and Alan stood together for a moment discussing the route, about which they disagreed.

"We make for that big rock and keep round it, don't we?" she asked, turning to Carnmoney as an authority, somewhat to the annoyance of the heir of the McQuoids.

"Just where your land marches with Gillespie's, I think," said Alan; "if I'm not mistaken, we skirt the edge of the hill that looks down upon the castle."

"I'll come with you as far as that if you like,"

said George, a schoolboy of fourteen. But his father vetoed the proposal promptly.

McQuoid noticed this; he had thought before now that Carnmoney was his friend, now he felt assured of it. It amused him rather; why should a man take so much trouble to help another with his own concerns?

In the middle of the night, when McQuoid's mind was tossed by the fever of passion, John Carnmoney's figure stood out solid, something that could be relied upon.

That was in the night time; between six and seven he was tramping across the heather with Madeleine Leigh. There are more unpleasant occupations at all times for young people than tramping across a Scottish moorland. The time, place, and the scene were favourable to romance, and Alan knew his own mind. In less than ten minutes they were well away on the old paths of experiment and discovery.

McQuoid did not allude to his ancestors or his own affairs in any way until they approached the turnstile.

The ground dipped for half a mile on the near side of it; they saw it standing up black and evil-looking against the sky.

They were going rather fast, having settled down to a long, swinging stride, and earnest talk. The best kind of love, be it of friends or lovers, is built up of conversation of things beyond our own personal hopes. Yet Alan paused as they approached the turnstile, and

asked if his companion would mind coming a few yards out of the way to see a historic sight. She responded sympathetically by look and gesture. He led her to a place where four paths met, green paths trampled flat among the purple heather. Just a few steps beyond the four green paths stood the turnstile, commanding the view over the castle.

"It was here," said Alan, "overlooking the castle, that they found my unfortunate ancestor and tortured him; I mean the one who lost his hand, of course: you know the story?"

"No, I never heard of it; suppose you beguile the walk by telling it?" said Madeleine, smiling.

"It is almost too horrible. Let me tell you first the story of my grandfather.

"I last saw him here, standing in this spot with his hand upon the turnstile, shaking and trembling as he stood."

Whatever Alan did or did not do that day, he gave her a good account of his grandfather. He had been right: they two would have understood each other; he would have had a good deal in common with the laird, more than his father could have had at any time. He touched on the laird's inflexibility of purpose, and his courage, as relieving lights in the general gloom.

He showed her his mother's portrait, which he always carried, as explaining both his father's devotion and his own.

And then he told her with something approaching detail the story of that last interview by the

turnstile. Perhaps it would have been better not to tell it; but she was too much engrossed to wonder why he did so.

"As my father and I came across the moor from the river," said Alan, "he told me about the castle. He had often told me of the river, loch, the boats, dogs, the room that he had slept in as a child. The Castle of Areverga was the fairy-land of my childhood. I was to sleep in it that night. I think my father must have buoyed up his own uncertainty by the security with which he talked to me. I must have asked him half a dozen times at least if he would promise to take me on the loch next day.

"We were talking in this fashion when we turned the corner, and saw the old laird waiting for us at the turnstile. All our hopes crumbled at that single glance. I did not know what was the matter, but I knew there was danger, with that sure instinct which is seldom at fault. It was my first experience of that distinctive heightening and exaltation of the faculties which real danger brings. We feel calm and ready; there is often an abnormal quickening of the senses, reasoning powers, and judgment. We have all read of this sort of thing, and know that it is physical, and little credit to any of us; and, of course, I have since experienced it in the veldt.

"I am told that, boy-like, I marched up to my grandfather in silence and waited for the event."

The McQuoid had paused.

"It isn't very easy to speak about that scene," he said at length, slowly.

And then he went on to talk with that restraint which is far more effective than the highest colouring. In almost every sentence he gave the impression that he was telling the more because he told so little.

"Even as a child I was struck with the strangeness of the meeting between those two. They stood looking at each other, and then my father spoke. I can see now it was a true and manly statement and apology that he offered. They began to argue: my grandfather wanted to get possession of me, and make me his heir; he tried to bargain that I should never see my mother. My father fought against it all the more vehemently because he knew my mother would accept at once. I stood and listened, understanding in a way that I was in danger of being shut out of the garden. There it was, and the castle stretched out before me.

"It wasn't the thought of the dogs and the boats that worked on me so much as the belief that it was mine; I had a right to it, and so had my father.

"At the crucial moment a couple of squirrels ran out on to the lawn, and sat bolt upright; I can see them now with nuts between their paws. I wanted the squirrels. I forgot my fears of my grandfather, and my father's warnings, and made a dash for the gate and pathway. I wanted the

squirrels, but to my grandfather it looked like an act of open defiance of his authority.

“As I tried to pass the turnstile he pushed me back, then seized hold of me and began beating me with his stick ; all well-brought-up boys were beaten when he was a child.

“But my father had spoilt me : he was nervous and excitable by nature ; he had grown more so in the veldt. He raised his stick and struck the laird—I honestly believe he intended merely to strike down his stick. His wild cry of remorse was as genuine and heartfelt as everything else about him. The laird had begun to say things in his anger which it was impossible ever to forget, and which pride forbade him ever to unsay. The only thing to be done was to part at once, and tramp the long three miles back to the village again. The rain came down in torrents ; we were both dog-tired and wet through by the time we reached the inn once more.

The next day we returned to Edinburgh, where my mother overwhelmed us with reproaches. She was ill, quite unable to leave her bed, or she would have insisted on going with us ; and she always believed that she could have saved the situation. She knew my father ; it is the greater proof of her love that she married him, knowing him as well as she did.

“I think from the very first, from the day that they were engaged, she knew that there was no chance of the inheritance for herself, though she cherished a hope of gaining it for me.

"She set to work as soon as she could get about again, and bore everybody's burdens; we were nearly starving, and my father had no more capacity for earning money than I had.

"My mother went back to her work on the stage; and we lived travelling about from town to town until her health broke down completely and we had to go abroad.

"Every night my father and I used to go to the theatre to bring her home. We went twice on Saturday. Sundays were always spent in packing up and travelling to the next town, wherever that might be. Through it all her humour, her courage, her energy, her kindness never failed; it was home where she was with us.

"The real misery of my childhood never began till after my mother's death."

Alan did not speak again about his grandfather save to tell the manner in which he met his end.

"It was after the news came of my father's death my grandfather took to watching by the turnstile. He used to go out there every afternoon, and he had himself carried there when strength failed. He watched from two to six; it was at two o'clock that he had begun to watch for us that fatal afternoon.

"He used to sit there in his chair, his head bent forward, his hand resting upon his stick. His eyes scanned the horizon, waiting, waiting, waiting; but whether he waited to bid us

welcome or to forbid our entrance who shall say ? ”

“ He waited because he wanted you,” said the woman earnestly, “ longing for you, seeking to undo the past.”

It was the first time she had spoken for nearly three miles.

“ Possibly. I don’t think so ; I believe he had never realised that my father was dead, and that it was for him he waited.

“ He used to be heard murmuring the name ‘ Alan ’ to himself, a ceaseless ‘ Alan, Alan.’ He had never called me Alan ; he must have meant my father. Oddly enough he had begun to scrawl a letter which might have told us much the very day he died. They found him there a few minutes after six, the time at which he was always fetched, and his jaw had fallen. The doctor who was called said he thought that life must have left him just at six o’clock. I have sometimes wondered whether he really saw my father coming to meet him in some other world.”

They walked on in silence ; presently Alan asked if she would really like to hear the story of the Covenanting laird.

“ If so, will you begin by telling me how much you have heard that I may not weary you with repetition ? ”

“ All I know is that the laird’s son was left alone in the house during the time of the Covenanters ; that the laird had gone out to fight the battle of Drum Clog. People said it was

very unusual for a laird to become a Covenanter. I do not know if that is the truth."

"Absolutely," said Alan; "it was almost unknown, but we had a feud with a neighbouring clan who espoused the royal cause at once and ardently. That may have had a good deal to do with it. About that I cannot say, but certain it is that the boy was left behind, to his own great chagrin. The lad wanted, as he said himself, to have the honour of striking a blow for the Almighty.

"'You'll be content to bide at home, and take what the Almighty sends you,' said the father with ruthless sternness, not knowing how fearfully the words would be fulfilled.

"While he was away Knox the preacher (a nephew of the famous John Knox) came up to the castle and begged for shelter, knowing well that it would not be refused. The boy, recognising his own opportunity, hid him away at once, telling no one of his hiding-place. There are secret chambers in that rabbit warren, Miss Leigh, where a man might hide for years and defy an army of royal troopers. If they burnt the house down they might find him, or if they pulled it down stone by stone.

"It has been known for invaders to search it and go away empty-handed, fully believing that their prey had escaped them. It would not even be easy to starve a man out there, because of the secret passages."

McQuoid paused as he was speaking; a turn

in the walk showed him one last view of Areverga.

“Do go on,—please, don’t break off at such a critical moment. What did the boy do?”

“He showed the preacher a hiding-place, but had hardly hidden him when the Royalist troopers came battering at the door.”

“They had traced their fugitive and told the lad at once that they knew that he was there, and they must have his hiding-place; denial was useless, or worse than useless. I must say that I think that my ancestor showed a good deal of resource as well as courage. He told them that he knew it was useless to resist; there were only two women-folk in the house beside himself; he would tell them the truth if they let the women go; they must let them take the boat and go across the loch. When the women were well away in the middle of the loch Alan turned and told them the truth, as he had promised. He was alone in that house now save for the preacher, and this ‘I tell you for sure,’ he added, ‘that he is in that house, and you are welcome to search it for a twelve-month and you will never find him.’

“The troopers were too angry to waste much time in threats; they tried beating him at first. I cannot go into details, especially to you, but he lost his hand.

“The father returned in time to save his life, bringing the news of the victory of Drum Clog; the troopers left their prey and escaped in haste. It is said that the boy came forward to meet his

father, concealing his hand inside his coat, and congratulated him on the victory. Then he fell in a dead faint at the laird's feet. Heaven only knows if these things are true, but they are not improbable, and they are typical of our race.

"The laird swore a great oath that the day should come when he would make the Royalist king acknowledge the maimed hand. He waited for years ; people thought he had forgotten his oath, but a McQuoid never forgets his revenge. He waited, hoping the king would come to Scotland ; when he saw it was useless waiting he made a pilgrimage to London, and presented himself one day before King Charles, as he lounged in the Park playing with his spaniels.

"The boy raised his right hand ; they say that the sight steadied the king at once, and he looked at him with a gravity and a dignity more usual in his father than in himself.

"The man burst into his story. Charles II. made him repeat it slowly, listening to every word. Then he said :

"It is our royal will and pleasure that you bear the maimed hand as your crest for ever. I will give you our royal motto ; it is the right hand, is it not ? And your son, you consider, has suffered for his religion ? 'Dieu et mon droit,' or rather, since the French are particular about genders, 'Dieu et la main droite.'

"My ancestor had prepared a torrent of wrath, denunciation, and prophecy ; he went away in silence."

"It's the best thing I ever heard of Charles II.," said Madeleine, her cheeks kindling at the story. She was not looking at him, but straight ahead, and they walked on in silence until they approached the inn.

Little more was said between them, but the sights and scenes that they had talked of returned to Madeleine in the night time. She was haunted by a vision of an old man in a chair, watching, waiting patiently by a turnstile ; but whether he was waiting for one for whom he longed, or was guarding the way against one he feared, none ever knew, for he never told.

CHAPTER IV

"HANG it all, Mamie, I am not at all certain that it isn't my duty to go and tell the Colonel." John Carnmoney spoke in this fashion about midnight out of a troubled heart. His wife, who was a good counsellor, told him to go to sleep and not think about it until the morning.

Alan McQuoid was also a prey to many voices during the watches of the night. At first he did not go to bed; he went into the billiard-room, intending to smoke and think his own thoughts. But he found his thoughts were "cabined" if he stayed in the billiard-room, and so he got up and went out into the garden. Even as he went two of the other smokers in the billiard-room turned and looked at each other. "There's no doubt about it; it's the same man."

"I suppose you're right, you usually are," said the other, laughing, "but on this occasion I'd give a good deal to be able to disbelieve you."

"I know what you mean, but I don't quite see that either you or I have any call to go to the Colonel."

The first speaker was a hard-bitten, middle-aged man not troubled with many illusions. The

other was younger ; he looked out of the window and whistled softly, but all he said was :

“ It’s the devil of a mess. I’m not certain that any man oughtn’t to do something under the circumstances.”

McQuoid had heard nothing of all this, but the same message was being repeated in his brain. He walked up and down the garden first, then he didn’t find the garden big enough, so he opened the gate which led into the farmyard and walked up and down the yard. Then he crossed the bridge over the torrent that divided the hotel grounds from the high road. He paced up and down the road, but in all that panorama of mountain, sky, and moorland there was not space enough. Wherever he went he was pursued by two conflicting voices with their strange suggestions. The first sounded like a parody or travesty of the words the younger man had used.

“ It’s the devil of a mess. Hadn’t you better hurry up and do something. If not, it may be too late.”

And the second, which sounded like a voice that he had heard in childhood and long since forgotten :

“ Go and tell the Colonel everything, and you will win her in the end. Only be straightforward, go and tell the Colonel. It’s the only way for you to change the past.”

“ Changing the Past ”—he remembered a poem from “ Moorland Sanctuaries ” with that significant and searching title.

And then Alan would ask himself why he should

worry about the past at all. He was satisfied, very well satisfied, on the whole, to think of the stories that he had told her. He knew that they would serve to keep the thought of himself before her in all the atmosphere of romance. They would bring her no real knowledge; they might serve to prevent her from asking questions; she would think that she knew so much. He had acted with a deep-laid wisdom in telling her these stories from a dead and a living past. He wanted to gain by ingenuity and skill and force that which could only be gained by the power of character.

Colonel Leigh had three rooms. Madeleine had arranged that her father's should be between her own and the sitting-room. She could tell by the noises that came from his room in the morning the stage that he had reached in dressing. Being naturally tuneful, with a good ear for music, he hummed and sang snatches of songs when in his bath; the sound died away through the delicate and critical process of shaving, and the silence deepened, until it was broken by his calling for his boots. He usually shouted for them, and then discovered them waiting patiently outside his door. Then the songs and whistling broke out again. Madeleine left her room at the call for boots, went into the sitting-room and rang for coffee. He liked his coffee hot and he liked to believe that he was always dressed at the moment when it was ready. It would have been difficult to grudge him so innocent a triumph.

One morning the sounds proceeding from the bath were fewer and less jubilant than usual. He must be depressed ; it was fairly clear that he was suffering from depression as he came in to breakfast.

"Good morning, my dear. Isn't the room rather cold ? Hadn't you better have that window closed ?"

He opened his letters. One was a long one ; he read it through slowly, then re-read parts of it, forgetting his breakfast, and then attending to it at intervals. Then he said :

"I've a letter from David Fuller ; he is coming over to spend the day to-morrow. You remember him, don't you ? The Colonel of the Thousandth ? He retired, he reminds me, just a year ago."

"Are you going over to meet him ?" asked Madeleine.

"I don't see why I shouldn't ; I'd better see about a trap at once. I detest being driven in a carriage when I'm not going to shoot at the other end."

He went out of the room ; Madeleine sat down by the window to watch the crowds at the hotel door, and to think out a luncheon for Colonel Fuller. The window commanded a view of the front door, and a good many groups were standing about in front of it. A large wagonette was being loaded with guns, sportsmen, cartridge-bags, gillies, and luncheon baskets. Four young Englishmen who had taken some shooting five miles distant had their quarters at the hotel. She

saw her father come out and begin talking to The McQuoid, who was standing watching the party start. There was something very pleasant about the way in which Alan turned to the older man. Alan talked with gestures; his arm indicated some proposal inviting an expedition along the glen.

The Colonel came in alone; Alan McQuoid had asked him to go and fish on the upper loch.

"It seems that Carnmoney told him to try a rod there; he's only taken the river. It's nice of Carnmoney, but I can understand it; there's something very strange about that fellow's position here. We all have our troubles, but when a man is set on a hill with his bound about him, for all the world to see——" He walked about a little; Madeleine knew that he was wrestling with an idea, and would develop it in his own fashion.

"There are some people like that: cripples, for instance; they seem to belong to a different world to the rest of us. The best men that I have known never offer pity or sympathy for misfortune, they offer reverence. 'The high-ground of sorrow'—that explains it, I think. Shakespeare said it, didn't he? If he didn't he ought to have done so."

"Marked out for special dealings by the unseen powers," Madeleine said at length slowly, and then recovered her usual tone. "And now if you are going out for the day, hadn't we better see about your sandwiches?"

They sent for the bread and the meat and cut and packed the sandwiches, for the Colonel never liked having it done in the kitchen; and they talked and joked a good deal as they were doing it. Alan was much in their minds, of course. Presently it occurred to Madeleine that Alan had never explained his reasons for coming to Areverga. And yet he talked much of his own affairs.

"I wonder why The McQuoid came here at all?" she said practically, tying the string of one of the packages.

"Naturally enough," replied the Colonel, "he had heard a great deal about it from his father, wanted to see it, and didn't want to come after his uncle had taken possession. There isn't any quarrel between them, he tells me, for they've never seen each other, but there might be if they met. I expect the fact of the matter is his pride interferes; he doesn't want to look expectant. One respects a man for pride of that sort."

Talk like this was going on in different houses in the glen at that time, for Alan's advent had interested everybody. Alan McQuoid had a great opportunity that summer, whether or no he used it. He found himself with men who believed that he had fought a brave fight against misfortune, and honoured him accordingly.

And as for Madeleine Leigh? These things are bound to influence a woman as sensitive as she was. She thought a good deal of her father's judgment, and forgot to allow for the Colonel's

chivalry and for the privileges of misfortune, though they had just been talking about them. Moreover, she did not quite distinguish between judgment and discernment as to character. The Colonel's native uprightness and generosity usually led him to act and decide rightly. But there were men with smaller ideas and lower standards who had more than three times his discernment as to character.

To return to the day's work, Colonel Leigh and Alan McQuoid started together for their tramp up the glen, each with a creel upon his back, a fishing-rod in his hand. They were both anxious to talk on the same subject, and both hesitated to begin. That subject was South Africa. Alan began far enough away from it in the end.

Alan began with superstition, a never wholly inappropriate subject on a Scottish moorland. "It appeared to him strange" that his logical, hard-headed countrymen should be such a prey to superstition.

The Colonel replied by saying several deep and true things quite simply, one on top of the other.

Superstition was due to fear; the Scotch people were brave but logical, and he thought it was their sheer reasonableness that made them believe in the Unseen. They knew that natural courage didn't help them there, and the long winter nights drove the belief home. Their religion didn't allow sufficient scope for the expression of the Invisible in the visible. To some extent their scenery

atoned for that ; but in the colonies religion that was due to scenery was always semi-pagan, non-moral in its requirements, and non-moral belief was the essence of superstition. That clever American, William James, says "that belief in God is the absence of certain kinds of fear." And some one else—he had forgotten who—that the real difference between faith and superstition was a moral difference.

Alan was startled ; he had no idea that English sportsmen were fond of discussing topics of this sort. After a pause he said : "I suppose their feelings for old families and their representatives, like myself for instance, is really part of the same thing. They don't remember me, but it's extraordinary what kindness I have received from rich and poor alike."

"I don't know if it's superstition," answered Leigh ; "it seems to me something a very great deal finer, a very fine thing indeed. I suppose The McQuoid would be followed still by a group of volunteers whenever he chose to raise his standard."

He relapsed into silence ; his eyes were kindling as he spoke, and he quickened his walk a little without knowing it. He was thinking of the glorious opportunity which might come to the man beside him if the war broke out.

McQuoid paused before he replied ; he had already found it difficult to follow the workings of Madeleine's father's mind. Yet the Colonel was transparent ; when he had once spoken it

was perfectly easy to understand his motive. But it was always difficult to say what the next turn would be; all was dark before he spoke, all was light afterwards. And now Alan saw his chance to turn that force and fire into the channel that he desired. The evil consumes the good if it be the dominating passion, making all things work together for evil; and it is written that there are other conditions under which all things work together for good.

McQuoid spoke slowly: "If I were the laird of Areverga I should jump at the work that you propose. . . ." He paused just long enough for Colonel Leigh to realise that the subject was a painful one, and then he changed it. He made a gesture, the gesture of a man who pulls himself together, dismisses painful thoughts, and gives his whole attention to immediate practical matters.

"Will you forgive me for saying, Colonel Leigh, how much I have been impressed by your personal keenness on the question? I knew, of course, that all Englishmen would be keen enough once the war was declared, but *you* realise its meaning beforehand. It makes me wish more than ever that you had been with me in South Africa during the last four years, or, for that matter, that you were there now. I could do so little, being only a civilian. A man with your knowledge could do so much."

It was one of those straight, knock-out blows which rob a man of self-control and paralyse his judgment.

"What do you mean?" stammered the Colonel. "Do you think that I could have been, could still be, of use, could serve my country in South Africa?"

"Well, sir, of course it's absurd for me to offer advice to the late Colonel of the 100th."

Alan warmed to his subject. He described the eager yet scattered loyalty of the farmers in Natal. The picture that he drew of these men was true, artistically true; he took hold of the facts that he knew and combined them into a living picture. Then he began to invent; he carefully disregarded facts which would have told against his own argument: such, for instance, as the distance between the homesteads. He touched on the broken, disappointed hopes of the men he knew, men who had trusted England in the past and found their faith abused.

"Think how these men would rally," he said, "at the call—excuse me—of an officer wearing the Queen's uniform."

After that he warmed to his subject and talked consecutively and eloquently for nearly half an hour.

It was impossible for Colonel Leigh to accomplish all that this man held out to him, but it sounded plausible. The Colonel did not believe it all, but the strong desire for service, for returning to the ranks of those who marched, possessed his heart and soul. So they walked on together: the older man in silence, fearful of accepting the great hope which had presented itself; the younger

talking aloud both with eloquence and earnestness, silencing the scruples that fought hard within him.

There was a pause at last; McQuoid gave time for his words to sink in, and then the Colonel spoke.

"I should like to go," he said at length, "and there is no reason why I shouldn't, except for my daughter. Perhaps her sister may come home this autumn."

Then Alan McQuoid knew that he would win, and, to his own surprise, all power of speech forsook him. His heart was seized with wild compunction; yet it was but seldom that he repented any deed that seemed to him desirable. He was filled with an odd conviction, a form of terror, that if this man went to the Transvaal he would return no more.

He argued it down; the thing was absurd. Why should any man be afraid to take a soldier's chance? Colonel Leigh was not afraid. But the heart of a selfish man has a power of fore-knowledge when it is deeply stirred.

"Don't mention this to my daughter," said Colonel Leigh at last. He, too, spoke hoarsely, almost as though he felt that they had been planning an evil thing between them.

Alan promised with absolute sincerity that he would never say a word to any one.

Madeleine knew when he returned that something was working in her father's mind that she could not follow. But she was not unhappy

about him, she saw that he was chewing the cud of a thought not estranged from hope.

But she was surprised at the eagerness with which he read out a cablegram the following morning. It was from his son-in-law.

"Hullo, what's this? South Africa, Helen Imes! Madeleine, get the unicode, it's on my dressing-table."

Madeleine fetched the unicode, and when they had deciphered the cablegram between them it ran as follows:

"Regiment ordered South Africa, sending Helen children home in *Arabia*, Basil Musgrave's escort."

After a little time the Colonel went downstairs to have another talk with Alan McQuoid.

Alan walked about a good bit that evening, and when he went indoors he gave some orders which astonished the landlady. They almost gave offence; he thought it worth while to use his personal charm in smoothing that away.

It so happened that Madeleine, who had been sitting in the garden with a shawl, came into the hall about that time. McQuoid was standing with his back to the hall door looking into the bar; he cannot have seen her. He went on sticking some stamps on to his letters while she rustled past him.

That evening she heard her father's and McQuoid's voices talking together far into the night.

The following morning Colonel Leigh was

again somewhat silent and preoccupied. Madeleine forbore to notice it. Then he went outside; it was easy to see that he felt he could think better when he was by himself. Presently she heard his voice calling her and ran down. He had one arm outstretched towards her. Then, as they walked up and down together, he detailed Alan McQuoid's plan.

"It's odd how one's ideas change even at my age. I didn't like that fellow at first," said Colonel Leigh musingly.

"Why didn't you like him?" Madeleine still longed to know the answer to that question; she believed in intuition. But Colonel Leigh did not answer her, neither then nor later.

CHAPTER V

WHILE these things were happening in England, away on the borders of our Indian Empire a man was feeling the pull of destiny. His name was Basil Musgrave. He had spent the last fifteen years of his life as an Indian civilian. He came from Devonshire, from one of those quiet, peaceful little homes where nothing ever happens. He had come out to a country where life was full of continual, strenuous, unromantic adventures. He was perpetually fighting against the apathy, and the somnolence, and unintelligence of many centuries. No sooner had he got an improvement started than he had to see that its benefits were not destroyed. If a good piece of irrigation was accomplished the natives would find some means of wasting the water, or would damage the sluice-gates in some way. During the first five years of his service he had taken particular interest in irrigation. It was a matter of bunds or dams, storing up the water which flowed so freely from the hills in spring-time. He was a good administrator and not infrequently made the villagers pay for part of their own dam. This made his rule acceptable to the Government, and also

made the bund much more useful to the villagers. They would not waste anything for which they had paid themselves. Musgrave used to ride out in the early morning to the dam-works, which were sometimes some miles away. On his way he indulged in thoughts about the dam—all the little things which needed his special attention. By this means he knew exactly what he wanted to look at when he reached the spot. It saved a lot of time, and even the natives learnt to appreciate his ready approbation. Since he always knew when they worked carefully, and since he always said so, and rewarded them with praises, it was almost worth while to take pains to please him.

On the way back Musgrave was consciously looking forward with pleasure to his bath and breakfast. He indulged in a different kind of dreaming then. He thought about the future, and the corn and crops which would be the reward of his trouble over the dam. These were happy mornings, and they were followed by long, hard days spent in work of all kinds. First there were letters to answer, many of which could not be left to the native clerks. Then there were the interviews, grievances, and complaints, which must be heard by him, as the local providence: father against son and headman against headman. A collector, after some years of experience, gains a kind of happy wisdom in dealing with these affairs; or else he fails to acquire it, and then the work will break him. It is not the

climate, it is not, as a rule, the difficulties of his position, it is the man himself. Basil had succeeded in keeping his head and shoulders above the breakers fairly well on the whole. He was a pleasant man to look at—crisp, light-brown hair, very straight and rather shaggy eyebrows over deep-set eyes.

Mr. Basil Musgrave's particular friend—he had only one friend—was Captain William Imes. They had not been at school or college together, but they had met each other first over famine duty, and that counts for a good deal, even when men are quite grown up. Common fighting the devil for other people's lives is one of the surest ways of making friends. At any rate it had taught Captain Imes to know the importance of reservoirs as well as dams; and Musgrave was up to the neck in them in a figurative, and sometimes in a literal, sense for many years.

Owing to these, and owing to the banks, he firmly believed in agricultural banks. Musgrave had been in India for thirteen years, and had only paid two short visits home.

When he had been in India only nine years Captain Imes went home, and wrote to his friend that he was going to be married, and in less than a year he returned and brought his wife out with him. Musgrave was glad—it would be pleasant to have another "married bungalow" near; but as he saw, on the whole, a good deal less of Willy, he began to concentrate more and more upon his work. Those banks needed a

good deal of attention; he found it answered well to drop in as often as he could to have a chat with the managers. Assiduous, ungrudging personal encouragement is the way to make things work in India. The gods had sent him, in his own opinion, a peculiarly interesting part of the world to rule, and, having few other claims on him, he ruled it passionately.

One day he happened to have a long discussion with Mrs. Imes on the value of capital. This was à propos of the agricultural banks. She drew a pointed moral; she told him that he was drawing recklessly on his capital of health and energy. He laughed, but Helen Imes could be very persistent when she chose, and was not silenced. Did not some of his own people agree with her? Musgrave was silent; his mother had written more than once asking him to come home for a year.

"All right, I'll go," he said suddenly; "it's more than due to me. You're just as bad as my mother."

Neither of them knew then that there was any chance of their actually travelling home together.

As soon as the matter was settled he looked forward to that year, expecting great things. It is difficult to say what men expect from that year in England after a period of exile. Perhaps to recover their vanished youth, with all its dramatic crises and all its splendid fellowship: they left it in England, surely they will find it here?

It was on the day that Mrs. Imes returned to England that Madeleine saw Alan McQuoid again. It happened in this way. Helen was expected on Friday by the steamer which was due at Plymouth. She was standing on the pier alone, watching the ship draw nearer, when Alan came up quietly.

"I saw you at Waterloo," he said, "and supposed that you were coming to meet some one. Can I be of any help?"

If the truth were told—and he did not tell it—he had really seen her at Waterloo and jumped into the train without a moment's hesitation. There was something rather splendid in the way that Alan could always do a thing like that. He had believed her to be going abroad; the South African liners touched at Plymouth, and one was due to sail on that very day. A strange new hope, a hope that meant salvation for himself and her, had sprung up within his heart. There was nothing improbable in the thought that she had made up her mind to go out with her father. If she were going, he would go by the same ship, though he sacrificed every engagement and every prospect. Poverty and hardship were nothing in South Africa, and they two could make a life of it together there. Madeleine did not know all this; but she did know that the man had seen her at Waterloo, and followed her.

It was only bit by bit that her heart taught her to understand the tragic irony of the situation.

The man she loved could recognise and respond to great ideals up to a certain point ; but he had no bed-rock of faith, or experienced love, or sacrifice from which to work for them.

The result of all this was that Alan was standing by Madeleine's side when the steamer drew to the pier. Basil Musgrave was standing with Mrs. Imes. And so in this fashion the two men had met and looked each other in the face for the first time. And Alan McQuoid saw at once that Basil might be formidable if he were fully roused.

McQuoid went back with the sisters to London, but Musgrave naturally went on to the home in Devonshire where his mother was awaiting him.

Naturally McQuoid learnt a good deal of Mrs. Imes's plans for the coming winter. She was only going to England for two or three weeks, and then she had been advised to go out to Switzerland.

"We shall probably stay there throughout the winter ; my sister and I are very fond of skating."

Somehow it seemed to be taken for granted that Madeleine would also be a member of the party. Madeleine turned round and handed her sister an illustrated article in a magazine.

"Here's a description of the sports at Caux," she said ; "we might try Caux."

Madeleine stood erect for a few moments in the middle of the carriage, looking grave and beautiful. Then she sat down and joined in the talk, in a quiet, merry, animated way. Helen looked at

her and wondered; but Alan McQuoid, who was a stranger, knew. She never saw him alone, and he left them at Basingstoke, but she knew that he had followed her that day to Plymouth. When she moved across and began to talk to him, she had managed to say to him quite distinctly that he must take nothing for granted yet.

It made no difference; it did not alter one jot or tittle of his established purpose. He did not know the means, but he desired the end, and he was ready to wait until the means revealed themselves. He found a good reason for calling once or twice at Double Haw during the days that followed. Helen was not dense, and, although she knew how to appreciate attention and respect from every one, she loved her sister, and they fitted into each other again as though they had never been separated. But in spite of all this she did not venture to say a word to her about Alan McQuoid. She wanted Madeleine to be happy, and somehow she could not connect the thought of happiness with The McQuoid. Yet he was in love, and Helen believed firmly in marrying for love if possible. How much did Madeleine know? If she were unconscious, then it would be wicked, positively wicked, to make her conscious. Helen was only two years the elder, but there was something very maternal in her love for Madeleine.

Helen would have been astonished if she had known the effect that she produced on the heir

of the McQuoids. He was very well pleased with himself indeed on account of his rush to Plymouth. He worshipped Mrs. Imes ; it was one of those frank, easily-avowed worships in which the best men can indulge. It would not have mattered in the least how many other men were present to share that worship with him. This was a splendid and noble form of intercourse with high-minded women to which he was unaccustomed. He would grow accustomed to it ; he perceived quite clearly how easily he would grow to it when he was Madeleine's husband.

That night, pacing up and down his rooms, The McQuoid congratulated himself upon his great decision. Better, far better that Colonel Leigh should face a few months' hardship and adventure in the Transvaal than that he and Madeleine should be separated for ever.

That same evening the three Musgraves were spending a very happy evening together. They had always been great friends ; there were no old scars to be forgotten or old breaches to be healed. Basil had already formed a plan for taking them both abroad that winter. It would be good for Brenda—she had been about so little—and good for his mother to have a thorough change. They could go to Lausanne, and might as well go to the same hotel as Mrs. Imes and her sister. But Mrs. Musgrave lay awake that night thinking of both her children.

Brenda Musgrave had led a very quiet life in

a little village in Devonshire. She had been too fastidious to develop freely in the very limited society that the place afforded. There was a doctor and his grown-up sons, and the solicitor from the nearest town came there in the summer: he had daughters as well as sons. All these young people were excellent friends together. Brenda had retired more and more into herself. Possibly they pitied her; it might be asked by an acute observer if she returned the compliment. She possessed, at the same time, a curiously good and a curiously poor opinion of herself. Both were not quite right; both were of the kind that would make it difficult for her to find her *juste milieu*. Mrs. Musgrave had an old-fashioned weakness for this discriminating fastidiousness, for it was directly due to her own training. But she wondered sometimes if it were possible for the great things of life to be sacrificed for the less. And that raised the further question of what are the great things of life?

The colour and variety of Brenda's life, and all its movement, had been connected with her cousin. Basil, partly by reason of his absence, had been the predominant partner of the household. When he went to India the chief event of the week was the regular arrival of his mail. As he sent his mother help she began to allow herself the luxuries of which they had often talked. A side-window letting the sun into the dining-room was known privately as Basil's window. The little pony-carriage made a difference to their

knowledge of the country and of their neighbours. When last he had come home, four years before, he had given Brenda a bicycle and shown her how to ride. He was always the same whenever he returned: kind, affectionate, brotherly, and reliable. She knew with rather a keen appreciation how much she owed to his steadfast friendship. She even told herself that he was absolutely necessary to her, and that she would have been starved without him. She knew all this; but she had never been allowed to know the fulness of her material debt. Brenda had had a good education, including six months in France and Germany. This could not have been managed without Basil's help. It was the material side of the question which gave the elder woman much food for thought.

Brenda's own fortune was thirty pounds a year; she had the control of it for dress and pocket-money. The greater part of Mrs. Musgrave's income was due to a pension; the rest of it, after her death, went to Basil. She could not alter this, even if she would. Brenda was twenty; she had as yet had no education which would enable her to earn her living. Mrs. Musgrave held it far better to begin by laying the foundations of general culture, soundness of judgment, and far-sighted views. Probably she disliked the idea of a lady, a niece of her own, working for her living. But she was a brave woman, and would not flinch from preparing Brenda for it if it became necessary; her niece could not live on

thirty pounds a year. Of late, however, she had taken to putting nearly everything aside, and spending as little as possible. She said nothing to Basil; she knew that he would probably always feel responsible for his little cousin. But Mrs. Musgrave understood the pride which might make it impossible for Brenda to take help of that sort. Mrs. Musgrave was wise; and, like most wise women, had the privilege of bearing other people's burdens. She wondered very much what would be the upshot of the journey which Basil had been so anxious to arrange.

One of the first results was a warm friendship between herself and Mrs. Imes. They met at Lausanne. Captain Imes had already gone out to South Africa, and war had been proclaimed. Mrs. Musgrave had watched through the Zulu and Boer war for Basil's father, who had been killed at Majuba Hill, so the two would sit together—talking sometimes, sometimes in silence, sometimes working and reading aloud together. Madeleine used to watch them as the days slipped by. She had wit enough to know that Janet Musgrave might be able to help her sister in ways that she could not. The sense of expectation and coming trouble had attained to consciousness, and was concentrated upon Helen. But Mrs. Musgrave, though she liked Mrs. Imes, and further intimacy increased the liking, had a difficulty with regard to Mrs. Imes's sister. Madeleine was fast developing a girl's not uncommon adoration for an elder woman. It was

natural enough. Mrs. Musgrave came nearer to her standard than any one else she had met as yet. But Mrs. Musgrave did not know all this, and, though she tried to be just, found it difficult to like this girl with her splendid beauty. Such colouring as that could not be genuine; but who could dispute its genuineness upon the mountains? Mrs. Musgrave felt particularly human towards the person who looked on her as raised above humanity.

Just then, however, a very unexpected event happened; it was simple, but big with issues.

None of those who saw him ever forgot Dugald McQuoid as he came into the hall. It had been one of those sodden days when the winter snows come down in their earlier, more ethereal form to visit these winter quarters. Madeleine had insisted on going out, despite the weather, and walking as far as Chillon. Basil had gone with her, because, he said, it was ridiculous for her to go alone. Then they had returned and were still standing chatting by the fire, when they heard the rumble of the daily bus which met the train from London.

There was the usual stir of new arrivals at the door, and then McQuoid, the Laird of Areverga, came forward into the hall alone, and stood there. Something made Madeleine get up and speak to him. It would have been more usual to wait, no doubt, but she was stirred by the sight of him and did not stop to think. The man

standing there beneath the lamplight, taking his wraps off, showed all his disadvantages.

"How do you do? I think you must be Mr. McQuoid. We heard about you from Mrs. Carnmoney; she wrote and told us that you were coming up."

The young man's colour rose; he was changed, at a word, from a tragic, almost Æschylean figure into an ordinary graduate just down from Oxford.

"How good of you! Mrs. Carnmoney mentioned you, of course, but I did not know." He was devouring her with his eyes, while she went on to ask if he had had a good journey, and heard that it was beastly, nothing but paper-boys shoving their heads into the windows with wholly false news. "By-the-bye, I suppose you are Miss Leigh? or are you Mrs. Imes, perhaps?"

She laughed as she answered.

"I am Madeleine Leigh. My sister has gone upstairs to dress; she will be delighted to meet you. Let me introduce you to my friends the Musgraves." The way in which she laughed somehow put Dugald, not into the wrong, but into the position of having been the first to make the advances.

Dugald resembled Alan McQuoid in this: he was a man whom most people would remember. He was very short, not more than five feet four inches, and his broad shoulders almost gave the look of deformity. His head was large, but very well poised and not out of proportion to the shoulders. His limbs were well-controlled and

his movements easy and alert, but it was the alertness of constant vigilance. He was a man of contradiction : his limbs and movements proved that there was nothing abnormal about him ; his eyes, on the other hand, had the dark, earnest look which we not unfrequently associate with deformity.

He was a man whom everybody liked, but there was a measure of fear mingled with their liking. So many men are afraid of the unfortunate. There were plenty of men among his fellow-undergraduates who would have come to help him at a pinch, and proclaimed themselves his friends, but they had not insisted on his companionship in their vacation. Many women liked him, and would have been fond of him, but there were no girls or women with whom he corresponded. His troubles were almost too obviously bound about his shoulders for all the world to see.

During the next few weeks Dugald talked once or twice to Madeleine about his unknown kinsman. He had invited Alan to the castle for his own coming-of-age in November next.

"One must have some sort of bean-feast for the tenants," he added.

"What did your cousin say?" asked Madeleine. Her interest was almost painful, and yet she could have wished that he would not consult her.

"He refused, through my solicitor." Dugald, who was walking by Madeleine's side, looked away and down. "It makes it difficult to do any

more ; yet there is plenty of money. He ought, in common honesty, to have a larger share of it."

Madeleine was startled ; she made up her mind to be on her guard, and say nothing that could influence him. She had just passed this resolution when the young man surprised her again by introducing another intimate topic. This time it was the Castle of Areverga. Did not Miss Leigh think that it would need a good many changes to make it really homelike ? He was a keen photographer and had brought away with him careful pictures of every portion of the castle.

He had also been over the old place with an architect, and had plans of the alterations which he proposed to make. He was especially resolved to alter the gloomy drawing-room, where he had been terrified in his childhood.

"How I dreaded the Sundays, and the family worship, when my father used to pray long extemporaneous prayers ! I can't have been more than five or six years old, but I shall never forget the old man standing there, reading and praying by the light of a single candle, with the row of servants in the dusky background. Sometimes in my sleep I repeat over again the burning perorations with which he closed his prayers."

"Can you say them now ?"

"No, but I believe the words might be recovered if I were subjected to hypnotism." He spoke almost fiercely.

"He improves upon acquaintance," thought Madeleine Leigh.

It was October when they settled by the Lake of Geneva, resolved to stay there for the month at least, possibly longer; it would depend chiefly on how the climate suited Helen and Mrs. Musgrave. They chose their hotel for the sake of its situation, and also because of its *chambre-noire pour les photographiers*. The hotel was at a village just outside Lausanne, but within the borders of the Lausanne *arrondissement* or circuit of justice. This they discovered some few weeks later, when the world had changed suddenly beneath their very feet. It was well then, perhaps, that Madeleine had not learnt to trust to the ground on which she stood.

In the hotel garden were two or three sunshade shelters—a poor apology for shady trees. It was a nice piece of garden raised terrace-fashion above the long white road which ran round the lake. Helen used to sit out beneath the shelters almost every afternoon with her letters and embroidery. When tired of both she would take a book or sit quietly dreaming, gazing at the mountains. Another favourite amusement was feeding the gulls, those great white "muettes" for which Montreux is famed.

Helen had begun sitting there one afternoon writing, when she got up and began to throw pieces of bread. The birds came eagerly, flying round and about her, and catching every piece unerringly before it dropped. Suddenly

some of them forsook her favours, flew up into the air in search of higher game. Helen glanced upwards towards her own room, which had a balcony on the second floor. All unwittingly Madeleine had come out on to the balcony with a plate of biscuits.

"I'll play you for them," she shouted, and began throwing rapidly one piece after the other. She called to some one to help her from within. Dugald came out and then Brenda Musgrave. "All in my room," thought Helen to herself; the sisters had rooms communicating with each other, and Helen's was converted into a sitting-room in the daytime.

Mrs. Imes entered with spirit into the contest, and Basil Musgrave, coming up, helped her. Several strangers, passing by, turned to watch the game. Mrs. Musgrave had just ordered their tea, and brought a fresh supply of rolls and biscuits. Madeleine was beaten for want of ammunition, and presently retired from the vantage-ground that she occupied.

"I wonder if she's used up all my biscuits," said Helen, laughing; "she's a nice sort of sister."

In a few minutes Madeleine and her party came down together, vociferously demanding tea. It was getting ready on a little table close to the parapet which looked down into the road. Helen was sitting there, dressed in white; Mrs. Musgrave was in black, as usual; the birds were still wheeling about near them, uttering occasionally discordant cries. Musgrave was leaning against the

parapet, half sitting, bending forward to chat with Mrs. Imes. They were talking about the big white road below them, which wound its way past so many famous scenes--scenes eloquent with national and individual tragedies, with the romance and glamour of immortal names. It was just the sort of subject by which Basil nearly always succeeded in rousing Helen's interest. She was looking very bright and lovely as she sat there, her head silhouetted against the mountains. Helen's hair was gold, while Madeleine's was only fair; Helen's eyes were as blue as the sky behind them. It was Mrs. Imes's day; every one had gathered round her, constantly claiming her attention. Madeleine came and stood by her with quite obvious pride. There were not chairs enough, so Madeleine glanced at Dugald, who despatched a waiter, and went himself in search of some.

Helen seemed to have been having an argument with Basil about the birth-place of Lord Byron's poems.

"Was it the 'Prisoner' that Byron wrote at Ouchy, or 'Childe Harold'?" she asked of everybody in general.

The chairs arrived; every one sat down, and then it was noticed that Dugald had disappeared.

"What's that I see?" said Musgrave, fixing his eyes on the open door of the billiard-room, holding certain packages wrapped in black velvet. At this season of the year, when climbing was impossible, Dugald became a photographic maniac.

He laughed himself when he saw them laughing, drew up a chair beside Madeleine, and sat down upon it.

"You've not seen the views of Gorges-du-Trient?" he asked, helping himself to bread-and-butter.

"No, let's have a look at them," said Madeleine readily. "You haven't seen them yet, Miss Musgrave, have you?" she added, passing them on to Brenda, as Dugald took them one by one out of their cases. Of late Madeleine, though not one whit less friendly, had taken to drawing a third person forward to share her chats and passages-at-arms with Dugald.

Brenda, who was much flattered at first, was beginning to draw her own conclusions. She liked Madeleine, and had been very anxious to make friends with the sisters when they first arrived. There was something about them which her carefully trained instinct led her to notice and apprise highly. Mr. McQuoid was pleasant, she had said to herself, but must be two years younger than Miss Leigh at least: about her own age; she was barely twenty. Then Dugald asked them if they would care to come and have a look at the negatives in the dark-room. Brenda felt half inclined not to go; they were always dragging her away into that dark-room.

It was just then, just as they were talking of moving, that they all turned round and saw an English doctor whom they knew standing on the

steps of the hotel. He was looking towards them and had a telegram in his hand.

"I'll go," said Basil, moving across to the steps almost before he had said the words. Madeleine moved her chair closer to her sister's side.

Other people were hurrying towards the steps, but the doctor put the telegram into Basil's hand. He returned, and read it aloud; it was the news of Kruger's ultimatum, and of the beginning of the war.

Basil went on quietly: "It is expected that the following troops will be the first engaged: the Gordon Highlanders, the 2nd Derbyshires, the 1st Bankshires," and so on to the end. The 1st Bankshires was Captain Imes's regiment.

"Thank you, Basil," said Helen, rising, calling him by his name for the first time. "There are not many people who would have done that—read it out at once." She hurried away into the house.

"People in trouble have a supreme right to be obeyed," thought Basil; "what are we to do now?"

CHAPTER VI

THE approach of the war did not interrupt the gaieties on the Lake of Geneva. Abroad, at any rate, English people took a pride in going on with everything much as usual. Mrs. Imes, who was naturally very capable, turned her energy at once into a practical direction. She arranged a working-party for the benefit of the soldiers; and English women came flocking to it all along the lake. From Lausanne to Territet the hotels and villas sent out their quota of needlewomen once a week. Helen further corresponded with her colonel's wife on the subject of Mrs. Thomas Atkins. She could not beg herself, but she organised a concert and revised her own expenditure as much as possible. In all these things Madeleine helped her, but still there was plenty of time to spare.

Now spare time was just the very thing that Madeleine did not need at that present juncture. Every one is affected in different ways by daily ceaseless anxiety for those they love. Madeleine's pain was constant: daily anxiety for her father first, then for Jim and Willy. She learnt to bear that and deeper troubles later, content to stand

like a soldier in the battle-field, when the mere act of standing needed all her strength. But now she was filled with superabundant energy, was always ready for long walks upon the mountains, and worked hard at photography with Dugald at her elbow. The young Scotchman, who had dabbled in chemistry, knew enough to make himself extremely useful. He gave her lessons ; she found that it helped more than anything to keep her from thinking about the war.

People who are in pain are not always considerate or conscious of the effect of their words and actions. Madeleine was accustomed to boyish admirations from Jim's friends, who were always ready to do anything she asked. If she thought of Dugald in a more serious light she also thought of the difference between their ages. She was twenty-three ; the laird, as we know, had not yet passed his twenty-first birthday. But when a man is twenty-one, and has a large house and plenty of money, he does not want to live alone. Madeleine liked him ; he was convinced that Madeleine liked him, and he was right in his conclusions. She liked him very much ; his strong determination and steadfastness of character showed at every turn.

It was not, then, surprising that his hopes should soar up like fire in that autumn weather. It was not surprising that outsiders who watched them should speak of it almost openly as a suitable and likely match. But a lady who had written to Alan McQuoid sometimes looked at

them and wondered at the things that she had written. The Musgraves did not wonder; they all three believed, for different reasons, that Madeleine would not marry Dugald. Helen knew that she would not, and thought there was a good deal to be said for her plan of treating him with so much frankness. And the laird himself? He was living in that whirlpool of fear and hope and suffering which is at the heart of life.

One result was that his tone and manner showed a more decided manliness than they had shown before. The weather was gorgeous, the vintage was just beginning, they spent the evenings and odd half-hours in the dark-room, but they all spent their days upon the mountain-side.

It happened one day that Madeleine was trimming the edges of some photographs when she broke the cutter, a small steel knife with particularly sharp edges. She looked up with a moment's annoyance. Dugald was coming towards her and she showed him the broken pieces.

"I must go and get another," she went on, standing up. "Will you care to come shopping, if you've nothing better to do?"

"No, not this morning; you can have my cutter whenever you want it. We are going up the Rocher de Naye."

"Who are we?" asked the lady, looking at him very straight, with an amused look in her eyes, in a way she had.

"You, to begin with, secondly myself, thirdly

every one else, excepting Mrs. Musgrave and Mrs. Imes."

Madeleine agreed, as she usually did, and thoroughly enjoyed her day upon the mountains, and then tumbled hurriedly into bed and slept for eight hours without even stirring. During the watches of the night Dugald lay awake, planning the months and years they would spend together.

The following morning he went into Lausanne to a Spanish shop noted for its poignards and fancy knives. He chose out a beautiful little Spanish stiletto with a long, sharp blade and silver handle. It seemed *nearly* good enough, with its dainty workmanship, for it had cost a great deal more than any one could have imagined.

"Il faut le prendre a Sud Afrique," said the shopman, who had recognised his customer as a Briton. "Cela rendrait du bon service!"

Dugald didn't laugh; he slipped the knife and case into his pocket and walked away thoughtfully.

Madeleine had a long conversation that afternoon with Dugald, and this was continued in different chapters over several days. During the last few weeks Dugald had accomplished the first stage in the journey which he had set himself. He had taken his degree before he came of age, and he was going to Scotland for his birthday in November. He had been born on St. Andrew's Day, November 30, and, as he

said himself, it ought to be a day of good omen. He had made all arrangements for feasting the tenantry, and had planned a shooting-party and having some friends to stay with him. But the war had made a difference. His mind was working towards a resolution to return at once, collect as many gillies and young men as possible, and induce them to go out with him to the war. Lord Lovat had already begun to form his scouts.

"I don't suppose I shall have much influence with them personally," he said to Madeleine, "but the name ought to count for something. There is one thing I am very anxious about: to see my nephew Alan before I start for the war."

"You have decided what to do, then?" She had experienced some difficulty in showing sympathy and at the same time refusing to give an opinion. He hesitated for a moment; her negative attitude had made him fear that she despised him for talking about it at all, as though she considered he had been boasting of his intentions.

"I am bound to stick to the estate," he said; "I think it due to my grandfather." His mind was clear on that point. "Besides, I want the estate, and do not want to part with it."

This was the sort of honesty for which Madeleine liked him. She looked her sympathy instead of answering.

"But a good deal of money was put aside when I was a minor," Dugald continued, "and he can have the greater part of it. I've heard from my lawyer; he admits that I could afford it." He shrank from

naming the sum, for which the girl was thankful. And then the young man added something about not telling any one but her, but he considered she had a right to know.

This phrase startled her; could he have any knowledge of the friendship between herself and Alan?

"I've no right to know," she answered gently, "but it's good of you to tell me; I am deeply interested."

Then she added: "I have met your nephew, I think I told you, and he interested me very much; he told me the story of your crest and motto."

"'Dieu et la main droite'; it's a pretty story, and the best thing I ever heard of Charles II." As he spoke he slipped a signet ring off his finger and handed it to her to look at. Family likeness is one of those strange realities which reveal themselves when they are least expected. There was something about the gesture and movement of his long, brown hands which reminded her of Alan. Perhaps it was because Alan had once slipped a similar signet ring from off his watch-chain and had given it to Madeleine Leigh to look at.

The maimed stump of a hand, powerful even in its infirmity, seemed eloquent of the whole race of the McQuoids. The man beside her was infirm, but he was full of resolution, purpose, and idea, improved by passion. Was there some inward infirmity or defect in Alan too, despite his grand physique?

It was not until Madeleine was dressing for dinner that night that she realised to the full the meaning of Dugald's words about her "having a right to know." The maid who was helping her, and who was an old servant, wondered why her young lady had suddenly grown so handsome. There was a ball that night in the hotel; the maid had put out, unreprieved, a beautiful dress of mauve satin and old lace.

Madeleine was standing in front of the glass, giving touches to her hair, when her face flushed suddenly. She turned round; Donnet did not seem to be watching her, but was waiting, patient, faithful, ready as usual, the mauve satin ball dress over her arm.

"How extravagant of you to make me put on this for a hotel dance," she murmured, slipping it over her head. She would have preferred a simple dress, but this one was ready, and Donnet, who was a privileged person, would have been disappointed if she had refused to put it on. So she sailed down to the dining-room that last evening looking stately and regal as well as beautiful. Every one turned to look at her. Helen murmured affectionately, as she took her place, "I never saw you look so well."

It was not surprising, perhaps, that Dugald's view of the situation had been very different from Madeleine Leigh's. The difference of age on which she had laid so much stress in her own mind had hardly weighed with him at all. It had been very easy for her to make herself com-

panionable, sympathetic, to annihilate the difference. He supposed that she was too good for him, but after all most fellows said that of the girl they were going to marry.

Madeleine's superior age was only part and parcel of her general superiority. She was older than he was, and better in every way. What of that? He knew that he could conquer difficulties; he had much of the long-headed tenacity of the Scotchman. Moreover, he was gaining in self-confidence. That day at dinner he sat next to Mrs. Imes, away from Madeleine, who was on the other side.

Dugald had provided himself with an excuse for securing a few minutes alone with Madeleine. The small silver stiletto which he had bought for her two days ago had not yet been given her. He had brought it down carefully enclosed in its little leather case, and went up to her when dinner was over. She thanked him prettily, and stood with him chatting in the middle of the hall near a group of palms. Something in the way in which they stood there made other people draw round and talk. Basil Musgrave held out his hand for the stiletto, and put it away into its case before he returned it to her, first running his finger along the keen, sharp edge.

"I'm going to take it out to the dark-room at once," said Madeleine, in answer to his look and smile.

"You are coming to the dance, of course," said Dugald; "you won't forget you promised to be

my partner for the *cotillon*." He was dressed in a magnificent new dress suit of kilts which his tailor had just sent him from Scotland; if truth were told he had ordered it by telegram. Despite his infirmities, they were a striking and brilliant couple to look at, "two of the very best."

"Not yet, I think," said Madeleine slowly and thoughtfully. New ideas had been working powerfully that evening. Everything was becoming so terribly obvious; she must go, or every one would know as much as she did. If Dugald must speak, she would rather he spoke anywhere than in the pauses of the dance. And yet somehow she found herself moving with the young Scotchman in the direction of the ball-room.

Meanwhile the bandmaster had arrived and several couples had taken their places for the dance. A lively polka set the room in motion.

"Shall we take a brief turn, and then will you excuse me?" said Madeleine, speaking as brightly as she could. "I really must run away to the dark-room for half an hour. I'll come back for the *cotillon*. Unless, indeed," she added, looking down on him, "you would care to come out and help me with the developing." No place could be better than the dark-room!

The man's face lit up; he did not look like a boy or a cripple at that moment, but like a man in the full splendour of his manhood.

"Of course I'll come out, and then if you are still inclined to dance the *cotillon* we'll come

back together." And they floated off into the dance, and spun round, neither speaking as they danced. Madeleine's face, beautiful as it always was, was a soul-stirring study of conflicting passions, love and tenderness and humility and admiration and the knowledge that the heart which Dugald so longed to claim as his own was not hers to give.

Directly the dance was over the young laird escorted her to the door, then went up to the bandmaster.

"What time does the *cotillon* begin?" he asked, first in French, then in German.

"We shall begin the *cotillon* at half-past ten precisely," answered the Kapellmeister in English. McQuoid laughed and went out into the night.

It was quite dark as soon as he got out of reach of the lights of the hotel. The thick shadows of the walls and trees might have concealed strange shapes of horror and of darkness. The white road alone was visible, running between the deeper blackness of the lake and the hill-side, with its grouped and solid shadows of the vines. The vineyards began immediately after the hotel grounds and went on to Vevey. Dugald strolled down into the road and looked backward and then forward through the darkening night. Then he looked up and all around; the grand shapes of the mountains to the south rested against the stars.

No one was with him at the time, but a stranger saw him, seated upon a bench on the

lower road. There was a light just above the bench on which he was sitting.

He was writing in a book: a diary with some recent entries was found afterwards in his pocket. It was easy to guess from the tenor of these notes that his thoughts had been full of a strange and deep calm. He was satisfied . . . his life up to the present had been curiously rounded, completed, perfected. The last entry in his diary bore witness to his perfect foreknowledge of some vital change approaching. "It goes too deep into the roots for anything but my marriage. I shall be able to ask her to-night. . . . It will come, but there may be a struggle involved in it. I have got the better of other struggles; I shall win in this. Just a month to-day since I first saw her. . . ." And there the entries ended suddenly and were slightly blotted, as though the book had been closed abruptly. . . .

Possibly he had been startled by some one who passed, or some hostile shadow had fallen across the page.

It may have been half an hour after he left the billiard-room that the laird of Areverga returned to it once more. He went through to the dark-room, which had formerly been a wine-cellar. The landlord had given it ample fittings: some shelves, a table, a couple of chairs, and an electric light behind a red glass shutter. There was an ingenious arrangement for changing the shutter to one of plain glass, and then to one of yellow. The room, or cellar, ran back a dozen

yards or more into the hill, getting lower as it proceeded. At the further end there was only just room for an ordinary wine cask to stand upright. Close to the door of the billiard-room the walls varied from 10 to 8 feet in height. This was the dark-room; the visitors who used it seldom penetrated into the further darkness, they did their work within the circle of red light. If Madeleine was not in the first part of the room no one would have dreamed of searching the dark corners of the cellar.

The doors both of the billiard-room and dark-room stood wide open when Dugald returned. It was easy to imagine that a woman had just swept through them, and that one would come on traces of her presence. The lights were full on in the billiard-room, but the cloth lay on the table. He went through to the door of the dark-room, and there, on the shelf beside the door, he found at once the traces that he had expected: an embroidered handkerchief with an initial in the corner, the book that she always used for her photography, and the silver stiletto in its open case. And there before him at his feet—he had almost trodden on it—lay the diamond brooch that she had worn that evening. Dugald McQuoid stooped to pick up the diamond brooch.

There is a certain door projected by the vision of those who could not have seen it, by immortal imagination, and over that door there is a legend written:

“Abandon hope all ye who enter here.”

CHAPTER VII

MADELEINE had indeed gone across to the dark-room very shortly after she had parted from McQuoid.

"I have got to fetch my slides and a packet of hypo which I left in the library," had been her last words to Dugald. She had carried her things—the book, the chemicals, the new stiletto—across to the dark-room at once. She had left them, and then gone back to the hotel and straight up to her room to finish her letters. It was difficult to get time for letters or accounts when one was out all day; also for such little things as writing up a diary or finishing a piece of needlework. When she got back to the hotel she noticed that she had dropped her brooch, and spent ten minutes in hunting for it.

It was an old and valuable one. She was vexed at losing it, and vexed with herself for her own carelessness. Should she tell the proprietor? If she had dropped it in the dining-room the servants would probably have found it when they cleared. It did not occur to her that she could have dropped it either in the billiard-room or in the dark-room; she had been

there so brief a moment. After about ten minutes she made up her mind to say nothing about it to Helen or any one else. It might be brought back to her, or something might happen unexpectedly; things so often did.

She went back to her room and gave her attention to her letters. She began at once, knowing full well that she was glad of an employment which kept thought at bay.

In half an hour she had finished a letter to Jim and written a shorter one to her father. Then she looked through the week's bill, which the landlord had placed seductively upon her mantelshelf. Then she made some notes in her diary and one or two in her account-book. When she was ready to go down she looked in the glass; it gave her no excuse for further delay. It didn't do to look at herself too much in that frock; it made her too conceited. The pin-holes showed where the brooch had been; she replaced it by another, and sat down to think.

The longer she sat and thought the more impossible it seemed to her to marry Dugald. And she shrank from wounding him. She had never shrunk from refusing any man quite so strongly and instinctively as she shrank from refusing Dugald. He bore the marks of Fate about him. In almost every look and gesture that man seemed foredoomed to suffer. She had been walking securely and pleasantly in sunny places; now she found herself obliged to meet the account. It had seemed so natural to show

her interest and sympathy, and make him talk of his own affairs. Her additional three years had given her, or seemed to give, a guarantee and a protection; but they had protected herself alone. The poignancy of her difficulty was increased tenfold by the thought that he was going out to the war. She could not let him "journey south" cherishing a hope which she was bound to belie upon his return. No, there could be no possible doubt as to what she had got to do, however much she dreaded it. She must go down and get it over as quickly as possible, and do it as well as she knew how.

Somebody had given her a book with pieces of poetry and extracts for every day. She read the portion for the day, slowly, carefully, giving attention to every word. She was conscious of a certain steadying of her own nerves. She turned the light out, and, throwing a fleecy wrap over her shoulders, ran down into the hall.

Even as she did so the music of the dance came towards her; she must avoid the entrance into the dining-room. Helen beckoned to her; she shook her head, then went up and begged her sister not to tire herself, and not to stay up too late. She promised to come back, just as she had promised Dugald she would return in time for the cotillon. And yet somehow Madeleine did not think they would dance it together after all.

Basil Musgrave was waiting to speak to her in the hall, and the concierge wanted particular

instructions about the boots that he was getting resoled and nailed for her. A quarter of an hour may have slipped away before she actually left the building.

"I am absolutely certain that he will meet me in the dark-room," she said to herself as she crossed the garden.

People who are absolutely certain seldom, if ever, get their expectations fulfilled. The Fates dislike compulsion, and find a sure way out.

People dine early in Swiss hotels. Dinner that night had been at seven. The dance had begun at 8.15; a clock in the distance struck nine as Madeleine made her way across the garden. The moon was sinking; there was unusual splendour of colour in the marshalling of the clouds. Out there in the west, where the land is flat, the clouds had grouped themselves grandly, picturesquely, as though in memory and imitation of the mountains. Madeleine stayed to look at them for a couple of minutes; the moving finger of Fate can write a great deal in two minutes. As she approached she thought she heard a footstep on the gravel; that footstep came from the other side of the billiard-room. It must be Dugald; in spite of his infirmity he had the family footstep of the McQuoids. If she had not lingered and dawdled to look at the clouds this history might have been written differently.

"If there must be such things as proposals, there could not be a better place than dark-

rooms," she thought. "'Chambre-noire pour les amants et les photographiers.' Quite a good advertisement." By talking like this to herself she was trying to keep her spirits up. Her last definite proposal had taken place in that crowded thoroughfare we know as Piccadilly. It was Edward. She had not liked Edward, but she had admitted that the way that he proposed was clever. Every one had thought that she would marry him—he was a splendid match; she would have preferred Dugald. In the matter of refusals her will was law; her nearest and dearest never urged their wishes.

She arrived to find the lights still on in the billiard-room; and then remembered that she had left them burning. No one else had been there, she supposed; the cloth was on the table and the cues were in the rack. When she got to the door of the dark-room she was startled; the things that she had left had been thrown down. The book lay open face downwards on the ground immediately in front of her, at the entrance to the dark-room. The stiletto and the handkerchief had disappeared. She stooped to pick up the book, puzzling over the problem; a suspicion darted into her mind for the first time. There were one or two little chalky marks on the linoleum with which the threshold and the first few feet of the dark-room were covered. Such would have been left by any one coming in from the white, chalky road outside.

There were no further traces: none could be

expected, but it was possible that a night-thief passing casually might have taken the stiletto and the handkerchief. There was lace upon the handkerchief; it was not very valuable, but it might have passed for more valuable than it was. Then she remembered that she had certainly been wearing the diamond brooch when she had left the dinner-table. Helen had begged her to fasten it more carefully; she had heard and complied somewhat perfunctorily.

Then she had come out here; it was at least possible that she had dropped it at the entrance to the dark-room. The stiletto and handkerchief might not be worth stealing on their own account; with the brooch they certainly would be. She paused to think: should she return to the hotel and have a further conversation with the concierge? Would it be better to wait? Nothing could be done till the morning, so it would make no difference.

Her decision was hastened by the sound of footsteps approaching, with a good deal of noisy merriment.

She recognised the voices of the two Russians whom she knew by sight, and one of whom had tried, as she knew, to obtain an introduction. He often made ostentatiously for the door when she wanted to go through it, or placed newspapers within her reach. That very evening he looked up and waited as she came into the dining-room to see if she would bow. Madeleine had not considered it necessary, and she was

determined not to meet him now. Acting on impulse, without pausing to think, she stepped back inside the dark-room and shot the bolt home.

As soon as she had done this Madeleine realised that she was likely to be a prisoner for some time to come. The only thing to do was to begin working in good earnest at her photography. She flashed on the light and began looking for a blue linen apron which she knew that she had left there. She could not find it; she supposed that she must have been mistaken in the matter, but she had felt so certain.

It was warm in the dark-room: she slipped off her shawl and fastened it in front as some protection against the chemicals. It was a pity to spoil that dress, though it was an old one. Helen and Jim always liked her in it.

"There's nothing like bare arms, after all," she thought as she poured out some "hypo" and shook the tray gently. Then she remembered that Dugald would probably come and find her; he would not be deterred by the Russian Jew. Well, she couldn't help it, there was nothing, absolutely nothing to be done except to wait and work.

The dark-room, as we know, was fitted up with a table, chairs, and some shelves on which she had placed her chemicals. The red light from the bulb fell on all these things and on her dress and hair and hands, but did not reach the floor. She had plenty of work, fortunately: she

had been accumulating negatives for some days, and these had to be developed. She was anxious to try some new developer of which Dugald had often spoken, recommending it for various reasons.

She turned to her book; she had brought it that she might have it to refer to when she measured the ingredients. The directions were quite plain, but Dugald knew many little things on the subject that were not written in any book. She read the page devoted to the matter more than once before she ventured to touch the bottles. She wondered whether it was worth while trying without Dugald; he was so exceptionally helpful. Then she resolved that she would not be dependent on him or any man for her photography. A good deal of her charm lay in her readiness to be helped, coupled with a capacity for standing alone. Madeleine Leigh, however, was still in the making on the night when she stood in the dark-room alone.

No spirit, either of good or evil, watching from out of the darkness could have foretold the future. It is difficult to believe that some such spirit might not have been watching while she pursued her work. There is a tradition that those who have departed from this world are earth-bound for a little space. There is a tradition that the length and duration of such lingering depends on the strength of the passions which they have cherished for the things that they have seen on earth. If so we may surely contemplate

without any horror the thought of a watching spirit, one who loved and watched. What would be the past and present and future of a spirit that was doomed to watch in such a spot?

There was plenty to be done. For more than an hour Madeleine worked on steadily, mixing, bathing, rinsing. She placed a large number of negatives in the bath to wash, and afterwards stood them up to dry. Then she turned her attention to some of her old positives. She had stood them upright by the wooden shelves within the sphere of the lamp-light while she was mixing the solution. When she was busy with the positives, sorting and arranging them, she sat down by the table, the light falling upon her sideways. That is at least how she would have appeared to any one watching from the other end of the dark-room. She must have been seen in profile, with the light streaming on her, bathing her cheek and shoulder, turning her hair to gold.

She was busy and absorbed, for a time at least she was wholly delivered from the malady of thought. When she was less absorbed, and returned to the full knowledge of her surroundings, she heard the knocking of the billiard-balls. This was the only sound that reached her from the outer world; she was literally buried beneath the earth. Occasionally the sound of angry, quarrelsome Russian expressions reached her. She wondered when she would be released. She had taken the precaution to bring her watch with

her, and when her work was finished she took it out and glanced at it. Twenty minutes to eleven! Perhaps if she waited another quarter of an hour the men would go. She sat down again and rested her head on her hands, thinking of the *cotillon* and Dugald waiting. She did not think consecutively. Her mind was made up, and if Dugald did not come there was no need for her to worry; possibly she had been mistaken after all. She was very tired with the long day upon the mountains, the brain and finger work of the last two hours. She closed her eyes for a minute and fell fast asleep.

She sat there for more than an hour, her elbows resting on the table, her face buried in her hands. She came to herself to realise that there were darkness and silence in the billiard-room, and that she was free at last.

On her way back to the hotel Madeleine met the porter going to lock up the billiard-room for the night. She begged him earnestly not to go to the dark-room. She had left her things about and would fetch them in the morning.

"Parfaitement, Mademoiselle." Madeleine was forced to content herself with this verbal assurance.

There was a light in the hall, and one of the big French windows still stood open; she could go in by that. As she entered a man got up from a long chair and addressed her by name. It was Basil Musgrave.

"Been working all this time?" he asked quietly,

"and after a day upon the mountains? You must be dreadfully tired."

She told him what had happened, laughing at herself for being shut in by two Russian Jews, yet not quite seeing what else she could have done. She admitted to herself it was a relief to talk to him: she had begun to know a longing for human companionship.

"You should have let your friends know your whereabouts," he answered. "My mother and I would have come to fetch you."

"Is anything the matter?" he added after a pause, looking at her, and perhaps noting afresh how tired she looked. "Anything, I mean, in which I can help?"

And then, because it was a relief to talk, she told him all the small happenings of the evening, all the lesser details, such as her struggle with the chemicals and her falling asleep in the dark-room. She did it with a curious wistfulness and power; the short sentences were pithy and yet pathetic.

There in the darkness she looked like a woman whose life, circumstances, and background have been swept away. None can restore them; she must needs begin creating them herself out of her inmost being. Basil stood still in the gloom where she had left him, till the soft, tired footsteps had died quite away. Then he pressed out the light and went to his own room.

But he did not go to bed. He took up a bull's-eye electric lantern and pressed the button; a spark flickered and then went out. He picked

up a piece of candle from the mantelpiece, and put it into his pocket with some matches. Then he went out into the garden through the long French window, by which he had waited for Madeleine Leigh's return. He had tipped the porter and told him that he would be responsible for locking up that night. Adolphe need not wait. The man was a philosopher with an eye to business, and never interfered with other people's private affairs. There were a good many gentlemen who liked to be free to come and go at night-time and no questions asked.

"I suppose I destroyed my reputation entirely by tipping him," thought Basil, laughing a little to himself. He closed the window softly, but could not resist one glance upwards at the lights in the rooms above.

There was a light in Madeleine's room ; even as he looked it was turned on in the room next, which was Mrs. Imes's. So she was talking to her sister ; he shuddered at the memory of her alone in the darkness all those hours.

It had come about naturally enough, of course ; but surely some of them ought to have foreseen and guarded against it. He blamed himself ; it was clearly his duty to take care of both the sisters in Willy Imes's absence. Now, although it was no concern of his, he liked to think of them together as he went out into the garden. Here, at last, was something that he could do : he could begin looking for that diamond brooch.

Musgrave had passed through a good deal of quiet uneasiness during the hours since dinner.

He was not a dancing man, but yet he had spent some time in the ballroom after Madeleine had gone outside. He had hunted up one or two men who did dance, and whom he knew slightly, and introduced them to his cousin. Then he had chatted to his friend Mrs. Imes, who was not dancing just then, and had fetched her some refreshment. It must be admitted that he had stayed there an unusually long time for a man who didn't attempt to dance. Basil, as he stayed, had been wondering every moment why neither Madeleine nor McQuoid appeared. He inquired casually for the latter in the smoking-room, but no one seemed to have seen him at all that evening. After that Mr. Musgrave had gone outside and spent the best part of an hour smoking and walking up and down. Quick-witted and keen-hearted, with all the powers of his nature intensified because he was in love, he had known that Dugald's proposal was imminent. He thought he had known too, and that with absolutely equal certainty, that Madeleine would refuse him; it was *impossible* for her to marry Dugald. But this long united absence? They would not have spent that evening together if she had refused him. He must have been mistaken, so he reasoned to himself; he had not allowed for different points of view. He need not lose his faith in Madeleine; it was merely that she had not realised her own

magnificence. It might be necessary for her to learn more of Dugald's immaturity before she saw his limitations. And Basil Musgrave himself might have misjudged a nature so very different from his own. He had argued with himself, trying to see the reasons why Madeleine had been right in accepting Dugald. Then, suddenly, when he had abandoned hope, she had returned and told him the history of her evening. Every moment had been precious in which he had watched those dear lips retailing the things that didn't matter.

Basil had delayed about five minutes in his room, thinking over the things that he had heard. She had mentioned, with her graphic fidelity to detail, the striking of the clock as she went into the billiard-room. She had counted the nine strokes. There had been time for a good long interview with Dugald before that. She had not mentioned Dugald at all, but it was clear that she had seen nothing of him during the last few hours. There was only one conclusion : she had refused him during the first part of the evening ; that accounted for her silence. Musgrave was sorry for the boy, but he would have been more than human if he had not felt relieved.

After all McQuoid had had every chance that a man could have, and he had made the most of them. It was not only infinitely better that it should be as it was : it could not have been otherwise ; Musgrave had known it all along. The other thing was absurd ; she was ten years his

senior in heart and mind and everything that counted. Yet he liked McQuoid: the boy was generous, high-principled, and with quite unusual fortitude. Musgrave acknowledged it to the full, but it did not alter his opinion on the main point by so much as an iota. He had not seen the man whom he could think about with any reasonable probability as Madeleine's husband.

He did not think it of himself; until he thought it he should not propose, but simply wait and watch and go on living as best he might. That was the secret of things, to go on living. He had not spoken of it to any one; there was an old-world reverence about his homage to his lady. He gave his mother an unusual amount of intimacy and confidence; he had not spoken to her of this. He may have felt without divining the cause that there were reasons why Mrs. Musgrave would be less in sympathy with him than usual. There are depths in all of us, if we are really living, depths where we must be eternally alone.

Musgrave was roused from his reverie by the sound of footsteps running in the direction of the hotel. That ten minutes in the shadows of the garden was the happiest that he was to know for many months to come.

Meanwhile Madeleine had gone upstairs and found her maid waiting to help her take her dress off. Nothing would induce Donnet to go to bed before her ladies; it was against her principles. The only exception that she made, or would have

made, was on Saturday night, when she went to bed at twelve. Her opinion of her ladies would have been very different to what it was if they had expected anything else. She was not a Scotchwoman, but her people were old-fashioned farming folk, and revered the Sabbath. More than once Madeleine had hurried back from a theatre or supper-party out of deference to these scruples. She had a theory that it probably didn't hurt you in the end if you pruned certain desires and purposes. She appreciated the woman's devotion, and would not willingly have vexed her by entrenching, even lightly, on the Sabbath.

Madeleine felt quite exceptionally, unreasonably glad that she had not to undress alone that night. There Donnet sat quietly under the lamp-light mending the lace on one of Miss Madeleine's petticoats. She was a middle-aged woman; her presence gave a subtle touch of comfort and homeliness to the room. Madeleine had the gracious art of appearing gratified at services which she had fully expected. She began talking to Donnet, as her habit was, asking if she had been to watch the dancing. Then it occurred to her to ask who had led the *cotillon* that evening. Donnet mentioned a foreigner, and Madeleine wondered more than ever what had become of Dugald McQuoid. She wondered if she could have been mistaken, self-flattering in her thought concerning him that evening. But no, her heart confirmed her earlier conviction that he had

intended to propose to her ; she did not think it, she knew it, with that certainty which there is no gainsaying. And yet, and yet, what could have prevented him coming to look for her, as he had certainly intended ? Something must have happened ; but she was too tired to think and reason now, she must get to bed at once.

Her thoughts were interrupted by Donnet, who had taken off the dress and was peering at it closely.

“ Did you know you’d marked your dress, miss ? ” she asked ; “ there’s a stain that looks like blood in one corner of the train.”

Her mistress turned, startled, her white face looked badly frightened, but she could not have explained her fears. The dress had not merely been stained, but seemed to have been soaked in blood ; it had penetrated to both sides of it.

“ What is it, Donnet ? It can’t be blood, surely ! ” Her voice was shaking, and she looked helplessly at the maid.

“ Leave me to see to it, miss,” said Donnet, gathering the dress up in her arms, preparatory to taking it out of the room.

Then she went across the room without a word, and picked up a pair of satin slippers, which had once been mauve-coloured, and hid them in the dress. And Madeleine, hearing Helen’s voice, went in and talked to her.

Donnet sat up late that night trying to remove all traces of the blood stains, but they would not go. Donnet did not sleep at all. She was a

clever dressmaker, and sat up reshaping the train, having cut off the blood-stained portion.

Helen slept badly, and only refrained with difficulty from calling aloud and waking her sister. But Madeleine herself slept with the soundness of one who has worked hard and recks little of the morrow.

It was past midnight; that morrow had begun when Musgrave passed through the billiard-room to the dark-room. The cloth was off the billiard-table; the red and white balls lay huddled together just as they had lain, or might have lain, after a succession of nursery cannons. The door of the dark-room lay open as Madeleine might easily have left it when she hurried through. He turned on the red light, but that soft and brilliant glow did not reach the floor, and it was the floor that he must examine. He turned the red light off again, knelt down, and took out his candle and matches and struck a match and began examining the ground. The clue to the mystery lay bare before him, though it was a very different mystery from that which he had expected.

There was a dark red stain on the cork linoleum; he turned to examine it; it was blood.

He looked a little further: a stream of spots or clots of blood led away into the inner darkness. Some of the spots were trodden on and most were smeared. There were smears near the chair where Madeleine must have sat and worked, and later fallen asleep and dreamt. It was possi-

ble, nay, certain, that she would not have seen anything that did not come within the circle of red light. There was much to be discovered; he must ferret it out to the end, no matter where it might lead him. He remembered that he carried no weapon with him as he stooped to follow the ghastly trail into the darkness.

Musgrave stooped from the shoulder to begin with, but soon he was going upon his hands and knees. He had put the light out; it was a fool's trick, after all, to come forward offering a mark like that. Then he paused suddenly: he knew instinctively that he was close to the object of his search.

He could not see it, but there was something horrible in front of him; he struck a match; the light burnt to the very end and scorched his fingers before it went out. Then he struck another, but he had seen enough to know that a dead body was lying before him. By the light of the second match he recognised those over-developed shoulders and stunted limbs. Dugald McQuoid, the man of whose warm and living hopes his thoughts had just been full, was lying stiff and cold at the end of the cellar, where Madeleine had been hidden for the last two hours. Before he touched him Musgrave had seen and recognised a silver stiletto in a pool of blood.

Musgrave had learnt to think of the examination and investigation of crime as part of the day's demands. It might not come to-day; it

might be postponed till to-morrow, but somehow it would be part of the day's work. He saw what had happened: the murderer, whoever he was, must have dragged the body there before Madeleine entered. But Musgrave had an Englishman's lack of confidence in the law-courts of the Continent; he faced the future steadily. It was a narrow and difficult path on which he must help her to walk; then the truth would declare itself.

He had thought out that which he had to do and seen clearly the only course to follow before he bent over the body. If there were no delay and no shadow of concealment, then all the fiends in hell could not keep back the truth. For himself, he knew that a good deal might depend on his being quite clear as to the details of his evidence.

With this in his mind, Basil Musgrave bent once more over the body, holding the light close. The head was turned round, turned almost as though he had heard footsteps; the face was full of hope. The body was much distorted; but the head was turned towards the one direction whence he could have seen the light. Could he have been dragged there, dying, and not dead? and if so what had become of his murderer during the two hours of Madeleine Leigh's imprisonment?

But all fruitless speculations such as these were brought up short by a sight which acted on Musgrave's mind with all the force of a physical blow. The dead man's face was towards

the light, and his frame was twisted; one hand was raised, and one had fallen powerless; the hand that had fallen was clutching something between the fingers. Basil knew that he had come on the clue that he had sought: the clue that would lay bare that hideous fiend's identity. He raised the hand as gently and reverently as he could; the light of the candle fell on that something between the fingers. Basil Musgrave saw that it was a diamond brooch.

It is an old problem whether or no belief in God and man can continue against the all-conquering evidence of the senses. The whole man is tested; hope, reason, and judgment may be paralysed, but he may force himself to go on acting as though faith and hope were still alive within him. Basil forced himself for one moment; then his love for her and his manhood rose up in one passion of horror, love, and reverence. He tried to wrench the brooch from the dead man's fingers; he would destroy that damning piece of evidence at least, and pawn his honour denying it, recking little of the consequences, rejoicing in the sacrifice if it served his lady. The dead man's fingers held the brooch as in a grip of steel. Musgrave glanced at the features; they were peaceful and triumphant. Death and weakness were triumphing over life and strength.

Then in a flood, at the dead man's bidding, his old reasoning returned to him; he felt his feet once more. The cause of truth and justice,

the cause of righteousness, must be one with the cause of Madeleine Leigh's salvation. There must be some explanation—alone there in the dark, kneeling because there was not room to stand upright, he fought out the great crisis of his history.

It would be still possible to offer violence to the dead and swear falsely on the matter; men would believe his honour—he had kept it stainless—and the sacrifice was his to make. But in the end it would prove a failure, worse than useless, not only for himself, but for Madeleine Leigh.

“You think so too, do you?” he said aloud in the dead man's ears after the victory had been won. Musgrave knew now that he could go on unflinchingly, dragging every particle of the truth to the light.

He felt as if he must have known this horror from all eternity, as he rose at length and emerged into the billiard-room. How long had he been there? He took out his watch; he had spent just five minutes in the dark-room. His own methodical habits were among the things that seemed to mock him on that awful night. He straightened himself and paused to think if there were anything further to be done before he left the room.

He must go and fetch a doctor. There was a young English doctor staying in the hotel; he must be roused immediately. Then he must call the concierge, and send him first to fetch the

proprietor, and then to summon the gendarmes. There was a matter-of-factness about all he did and thought and planned, like one turned to stone. He even wished that he could set a seal on the door, and secure that all the evidence remained untouched. It was a thing that he would have done as a matter of course in India ; none would have dared to break the seal. He was accustomed to move with the majesty of an Empire behind him ; now he was powerless and alone.

Just then the sound of hurrying footsteps broke upon his ears in the awful stillness.

“ Qui est la ? ” Though the words were French the voice and accent were unmistakably English. Burnett, the English doctor, came in running, followed by Adolphe, the porter. The man had paid no attention to Miss Leigh’s strict injunctions not to enter the dark-room. He had discovered the body, and leaving it where it lay had rushed to rouse the concierge and to fetch the doctor.

The two Englishmen interchanged glances of something like relief as they recognised each other. Musgrave spoke a word or two.

“ You had better go and see for yourself, and let me know if you want any help.” Then the doctor went past him into the dark-room.

The doctor was young and strong, but he could not bring his strength to bear ; he had to go upon his hands and knees. They heard him dragging the body as quietly and gently as he could over the rough, uneven surface. Then they

heard him struggling to his feet upon the linoleum in the darkness ; he was lifting the dead man. He came out carrying in his arms the cramped, distorted body of the Laird of Areverga.

The young man looked as though he had died, like so many of his ancestors, in mortal combat. The kilt was torn and stained, and blood was on the sporran. The stiff right hand, raised as though in appeal, might well recall his crest and motto, " *Dieu et la main droite.* "

They laid him down gently and reverently on the billiard-table, and tried to straighten the poor distorted limbs.

" The odd thing is that the features are neither distorted nor unhappy. But what a murderous weapon ! "

The doctor went on with his quick, intelligent, thorough examination even while he talked. He felt the body in every part ; that his touch was reverent as well as gentle Musgrave noticed as he stood watching.

" Anything else the matter ? "

" No, this is the only wound, but, good heavens ! this is enough for any man. And there is no further evidence in the dark-room ; I searched carefully with the bull's-eye before I came away. "

Then he pointed out the brooch and asked if any one could identify it ; did it belong to any one in the hotel ? By this time the concierge reappeared with the proprietor and was more than ready to tell all he knew. He knew the owner of the brooch ; he had seen Miss Leigh wearing

it that evening. She had thrown her shawl back as she stopped to speak to him, and afterwards he had noticed that it had disappeared. He supposed that she had taken it off, being afraid of losing it in the dance. The porter was not anxious to let the concierge play a more important part than was necessary. He said that he had seen Mademoiselle as she came from the billiard-room half an hour ago. She had begged him not to go into the dark-room that night, but he had known himself that it was his duty to go in.

The doctor's face was very grave as he took down the evidence.

CHAPTER VIII

THE news of the murder, and of other things that had happened on that night, spread rapidly round the Lake. An Englishman, or rather a Scottish gentleman, had been found murdered in a dark-room, and an English lady had been arrested for it. After a day or two there were portraits of Madeleine in all the newspapers, and of the murdered man. It was part of Mrs. Musgrave's work to keep the sight of these from Helen during the next few days.

There was a good deal of ill-feeling, it must be remembered, against the British on the Continent in those days. We all know how it was let loose naturally, if unreasonably, during the worst days of the Boer War. We English, acting and thinking as individuals, know how to bear our troubles with due silence and reserve. When anything is the matter, or likely to become the matter, with the nation, then we shout our woes aloud. It can hardly be helped; we are governed by a multitude, and a multitude can scarcely do its thinking quietly. The nation cannot take counsel with itself in so low a whisper that it will not be overheard.

Foreigners believed, on our own authority, that we were at our wits' end during the Boer War.

Then, too, the papers revelled almost openly in the fact that the murderess was clearly an English-woman. There was no room for doubt, the man had been killed by a weapon which he had himself given her that same afternoon. He had followed her to the dark-room, where she had gone to escape the attentions which she disliked. She had remained alone in the dark-room for two hours after the murder had been committed. She had remained there until she could escape without its being known where she had spent the evening.

If any question arose as to the motive, surely human nature supplied the answer. The young man was known to be desperately in love with her, he had found her alone somewhat late at night in a spot remote from all contact with the hotel. One of the papers counselled the young lady or her lawyers to plead justifiable homicide. The Swiss jury, it declared, would be gallant and chivalrous, and ready to make any allowance under the circumstances.

Musgrave, who forced himself to read a good deal, put down that article unfinished. He had read enough to know that dislike of the English would tell heavily against Madeleine in the trial. And that article which he could not finish exactly suited the taste of the reading public.

Basil wondered how much or how little Helen Imes realised of all this.

He was surprised at Helen. She looked so fragile, dependent, he thought she would have been prostrated by the blow; instead she was alert, vigilant, controlled. He had sent his mother to her room to break the news to her before seven o'clock that morning. Mrs. Musgrave had found Mrs. Imes sleeping soundly and heavily after a disturbed night. She had heard everything, then got up and dressed and sent a message begging him to come and see her. He had gone at once, half expecting that she would ask him to take over all the responsibility. He saw that he was mistaken; no one but herself should protect her sister and her sister's name. Helen, the graceful beauty of Simla, had disappeared, and there was a different being in her place.

There were new, hard lines about her mouth, the marble forehead was creased with unceasing thought. This new woman was capable of energy, purpose, determination, unflagging perseverance; if need be she would be capable of revenge.

Only towards himself, though she directed him, and expected him to carry out her instructions, there showed the old simplicity and calm trustfulness. That quiet, direct manner reminded him of Madeleine, whom he had seen grow quiet in difficult places in the mountains. It would have been a matter of course to help Imes's wife, it was joy unspeakable to serve Madeleine's sister. For Basil, from the moment that he had

seen Madeleine at the station, had known that he had met his fate. Yet after all it was the fate that he had hoped for—to meet a woman who claimed his allegiance at a stroke. He had few women friends; a certain innate quality of self-mistrust kept him back from making any.

Mr. Musgrave had made all inquiries about the legal procedure, and told Mrs. Imes everything that it was needful for her to know.

“Since an arrest has been made, Swiss law demands that the inquest should be held to-day,” he said. “It is unlawful to keep any one in prison for more than twenty-four hours without a regular inquiry.”

Musgrave had mentioned the law on purpose; it brings a sense of security to a woman of Helen’s make. Her eyes were fixed upon him. There was something docile in her attitude, he saw that she was giving him her full attention.

“It will be held in the billiard-room. I shall be present, because I am one of the chief witnesses, nominally against her, but I know that I can do more to help in that way than in any other. There will, I hope, be several witnesses among her friends.” He said the last words slowly. He was trying to prepare her mind for the fact that she, too, must be present to identify the diamond brooch.

She looked at him thoughtfully; for a moment she did not understand what he wanted to tell her. Yet the colour rose in the proud, beautiful face.

"You mean that there will be a good deal of prejudice against my sister because she is an Englishwoman?"

"That will count for something, possibly not for a great deal; the Swiss lawyers are usually accurate and careful. At present I am only sure that the more witnesses there are who really know your sister the better it will be."

Helen was silent for a moment. "Can I be present?" she said. There was a great deal compressed into those four words.

"Certainly, if you will let me tell the police that you can identify the diamond brooch." She knew that Dugald had been found clutching it.

She gave a little gasp. He had shown her the first definite thing she could do to help her sister. She was not a stupid woman, she did not want either to rush about, or to spend a lot of money to satisfy her own feeling of having done something.

After that he ventured to give her a little lecture on the proper attitude of a witness.

"We mustn't conceal anything, of course; that is the only way that the truth can show itself. But, on the other hand, we must keep our wits about us; we mustn't let the counsel for the prosecution get the better of us. He will do it if he can, he will try to trap us into some admission that presents things wrongly. Forgive my preaching, but sincerity and presence of mind are the two great requisites for a really good witness."

"It's good that you are here, Basil," she said, calling him by his name once more, and yet rising to dismiss him. There was a return of her old graciousness and of her old queenliness in that action of dismissal.

Madeleine had been arrested in her bed by the police that morning as soon as it was daylight. She had been roused from sleep; she had had just one minute for preparation before she pulled the bolt-string. She had known that something terrible had happened when she heard that knocking outside her bedroom door. Thus taken by surprise, there had been little to regret as she looked back upon that memorable scene.

"She nothing common did nor mean."

She would have been grieved afterwards to think that it had been otherwise.

The chief of the gendarmes had come into her room and had made the arrest, personally laying his hand upon her.

"Tell me what has happened," she had said, trying to pull herself together and meet the situation in a way worthy of Colonel Leigh's daughter.

They told her. The chief of the gendarmes did not speak brutally, but with quiet civility; he even suggested the possibility of a mistake. In spite of all her efforts at self-control, she turned a little pale, though she did not move. She had thrown a pale-blue muslin wrap about her shoulders and thrown all her hair back in her

moment of preparation. As she lay still even the gendarmes saw that, though staring straight in front of her, she was seeing nothing. She was not thinking of herself, but of the terrible, violent death to the man whom she had known so intimately.

"Dugald McQuoid, the Laird of Areverga, has been found murdered in the dark-room. He was a cripple, deformed almost; who could have touched him, who could have been so brutal?"

It was a strange cry for a woman who had murdered a man in defence of her own honour. Madeleine Leigh, strong and courageous, would have found some better way of escape than that. "They do not do these things," as Musgrave said laconically to Burnett before the week was out. "They do not do these things when they have centuries of courage and experience of the world behind them."

The chief of the gendarmes was not a black-guard. There was indifference rather than discourtesy in his manner. He said nothing, but laid the order for her arrest before her eyes with a quiet shrug. She hardly read the words, but she understood the meaning of his uniform and his presence in her room. There was nothing to be done, of course, except to submit to the misunderstanding. She spoke in French: "I understand, monsieur, he was found murdered in the dark-room where I was hidden for so long. I am ready to go with you if you will give me an hour in which to dress and to collect some things."

She had been thinking how long she ought to ask for ; she must not look disordered when she left her room.

The chief replied civilly, if a trifle pompously, that there was no need for mademoiselle to hurry. She was at liberty to stay where she was for the present, but he must place a guard before the door. The *juge de paix* would hold an inquest in the afternoon over the dead man's body, and mademoiselle would have to attend. Meanwhile, he must please ask leave to search the room.

Before he left he added that *café* or *déjeuner* should be brought to her when she desired it.

"Dans une demi-heure," she replied faintly, relieved at the thought of being left alone. Then she asked if she might see her friends. The man replied, still civilly, that he regretted that it was impossible until after the examination by the *juge de paix*.

The Englishwoman's unexpected quietness had brought him no small measure of relief.

Madeleine, left alone, lay back among her pillows, with the thought of the murdered man upon her heart and brain. Was it only yesterday he had laid bare before her the noble and generous lines on which he had planned his life? Was it only yesterday that he had treated her as his divinity, saying nothing about himself, yet making his purpose plain? How clearly the meaning of his words and looks had dawned on her in that room just twelve hours ago. It was less than twelve hours since she had waited for

him to come and lay his homage at her feet. And all the while he had been lying stiff and cold and dead a few yards away. She was glad to think that he had died triumphantly before she had told him all she had to tell him. How she had dreaded that interview, seeing nothing before her but to shatter his hopes and tell him all the truth.

He had died in ignorance. Thank God for that. A Higher Power had interfered and given him back his freedom. She began to think about the things that had happened that night before she came into the dark-room. Would that she had been a few minutes earlier that she might have been with him and helped him to the last! Nay, might she not have saved his life?—two of them against the villain who stole the diamond brooch. To Madeleine herself the mention of her own brooch had explained the history and motive of the crime. Some thief had found it. Dugald, having come on him, had tried to regain it, the man had defended himself with the stiletto. And then, with this thought, there came back for the first time the full meaning of what had happened as it concerned herself. She was practical, and trained to think. She lay still and shuddered. There must be some way out, she would yet devise it. She could not realise it all. The horror of Dugald's fate, and of her own impending, lay like a nightmare upon her brain. Many people in the hotel wondered how Madeleine spent the hours between the inquest and her arrest. A form of

numbness descended for a time, excluding thought, but not excluding pain. After about an hour she discovered the value of choosing thoughts that helped her and that gave her strength. She couldn't think about the future—"that way madness lies." Some instinct of sanity prevented her from dwelling on it.

She thought about the newspapers, and racked her brains for some way of preventing the news from travelling out to the war. It was not until she left her room to go down to the *enquête* that she learnt that Ladysmith had been surrounded.

There was one among their party to whom none had leisure to give a thought during that terrible forenoon. Basil, though he thought about his mother, turned to her for help, and let her know all that was passing, had no time, naturally, to think of his cousin Brenda. But this had been a busy day for Brenda, one of the busiest and most strenuous she had ever known. She had suddenly seen an opportunity of helping some one who needed help, and had resolved to seize it. She had been awake when her cousin came to tell the news to Mrs. Musgrave in the early morning. There was something very unusual in his coming so early to wake her; there must be something wrong. Brenda could not hear his words, and did not want to, but she heard Madeleine's name repeated more than once. Then came Mrs. Musgrave's voice, loud and clear and full of feeling; little wonder that it penetrated!

"Give me two or three minutes, my darling, while I put something on; it will frighten her the less."

Brenda had waited a minute, then slipped in quietly and helped her aunt with her dress and cap. The elder woman's movements were precise and swift, but she arranged everything with her usual neatness. In moments of crisis the well-trained, well-disciplined character usually obeys conventions still. But it is not bound by them; it lifts them with its own sudden uplifting into a higher atmosphere. There was something uplifting about Mrs. Musgrave when she left her room and went to Helen Imes.

Brenda had dressed herself and waited; her aunt was a good deal shaken when she returned. When she could leave her, the niece went downstairs; she thought she knew exactly what she had to do. She watched an opportunity to slip in with Donnet, and went up to Mrs. Imes and asked if she could help her.

"Let me do what I can; would you like me to find fresh rooms for you? You cannot stay here."

Helen was surprised, but glad of the suggestion; it was one of the things that helped to keep her going. After that Brenda had gone down to the library to think out her plans and gain the necessary information. She learnt a good deal by asking casual questions. None seemed to think that Madeleine would be set at liberty. If she were committed for trial she would be de-

tained in *prison préventive* ; the prison-house was in Lausanne, the hotel was a little way outside the town, on the road to Vevey.

Brenda went over to Vevey and secured some rooms in a house where their party would be the only visitors. She engaged three at once, for Mrs. Imes, for Donnet, and one either for Madeleine or herself. If Madeleine were set at liberty, then the sisters would probably wish to be alone together. Then she telephoned to Helen, and told her that the nicest rooms that she had seen happened to be at Vevey. Helen thanked her fervently.

"I will go there this afternoon ; Donnet can do the packing—and you, perhaps you would come and help me later."

The inquest was held, as most people had known and expected that it would be held, in the billiard-room.

Musgrave was thankful to remember that Helen had not passed through the ordeal of the discovery the previous night. The time was fixed for three o'clock ; he went to her room to escort her down about ten minutes before the time. She must at any rate be spared the sight of her sister going down escorted by the gendarmes. Musgrave foresaw everything with his heated, fervent imagination, and saved Helen much. But he felt he could do so little ; the satisfaction that he got from it was like food thrown to increase the tortures of a starving man. It only availed to impress on him his helplessness to help and

serve Madeleine in her utter need. He was not a mere boy, he had passed through many strange experiences in his life, but none quite like this. Many thoughts arose and stormed their way in fury through Basil's brain as he stood motionless in the billiard-room. "No man can deliver his brother's soul"; he had read that often, now he knew its force. And yet how often a man has power to plunge another's into a furnace, heated sevenfold. Is the power for evil only? Does all our talk of brotherhood, fellowship, and the solidarity of the universe imply the power to ban only and not the power to bless?

This was the question which the actors in this story asked themselves often; not in the language of the philosophers, but through the stress and cry of utter human need. Some one had done it, some one had murdered Dugald, and brought Madeleine down to the very gates of death, and they who watched had little power to save.

Madeleine was conscious of an almost physical change in the atmosphere as she came into the billiard-room. All her life she had been unconsciously surrounded with that voiceless respect which hedges an English lady. People stared at her as she walked; she was handsome enough to be accustomed to be looked at, but these glances were very different. She had dressed quietly, but with no little care, in a grey cashmere with a large black hat. She would make a brave fight to keep her end up from the very beginning, and they were only at the beginning. She carried

her head magnificently, and swept through the garden regardless of those who walked beside her. She almost annihilated that cross-fire of suspicion and commentary by sheer force of character. Helen was the first to notice the change, the subtle change that was taking place in her sister. It is said that it is love which has the prerogative of changing a girl into a woman and a woman into a girl. But in any deep experience years may be fulfilled or brought to nothingness if we seize hold of the opportunity; in other words, the fallacy of the time-doctrine may be demonstrated before our very eyes.

The inquest did not last very long, but to those who took part in it it seemed interminable. Helen and Basil stood together. Madeleine looked relieved to see them together when she came in. Something like the most discreet smile of sympathy in the world passed between these three. Then the prisoner was obliged to go and stand by herself a little distance away from them.

Something lying on the table was covered up by a long white cloth when Madeleine came into the room. The judge ordered the prisoner to look at it, and then ordered the cloth to be removed. Perhaps he meant to test her; she pressed her hands together, but except for that she showed no outward sign. The Laird of Areverga was wearing the kilt that he had worn the last time that they had danced together. Perhaps it gave her strength and courage; had she not accomplished feats of endurance with

Dugald needing both of these? She spoke slowly, distinctly, with quiet yet rising scorn, facing her judge in full.

“J’ai connu déjà, Monsieur, qu’il était mort; que voulez-vous? C’est Monsieur Dugald McQuoid.”

Madeleine had longed greatly for some one with whom to take counsel: she had no one but her own heart. Instinctively she had arrived at the same practical conclusion as Basil and Helen had done before her. The only thing to be done was to tell the story succinctly, clearly, and not to vary a single detail. She talked French readily in ordinary conversation, but now she paused and spoke in English, demanding an interpreter as a natural right.

Musgrave was glad to see it; it meant that she had got her back to the wall, and would fight to the very last. Her voice vibrated with a force which was really due to the intense effort to control emotion.

“My name is Madeleine Leigh. I am the daughter of Colonel Leigh, formerly commanding the 100th Foot. My father is in South Africa; to the best of my knowledge he is serving as a volunteer, and is now shut up in Ladysmith. I am travelling with my sister. We met Mr. McQuoid at Maderanerthal this September and previously in Scotland. I saw him last night in the hall of the hotel immediately after dinner. I have not seen him since. It is true that he asked me to dance with him that evening and that I was

engaged to him for the *cotillon*. I did not return for the dance. I was detained in the dark-room by two Russian gentlemen who occupied the billiard-room."

The incident of the Russians, simple and natural though it was, sounded oddly improbable in those surroundings. Madeleine admitted everything. She acknowledged that she had stayed in the dark-room until every one had left the ballroom. She admitted that the diamond brooch had belonged to her, and that Dugald had given her the silver stiletto. What was the use of denying it? her hope was to shorten the proceedings for her own sake as well as Helen's. There was abundant evidence to justify a trial, and the verdict of wilful murder was returned.

This was the way that Madeleine Leigh filled the pause that fell after the judge had spoken.

"Est ce que j'ai permission de parler à Madame ma sœur?" she asked in fluent, scornful French. It is only in royal circles, as a rule, that people use the Madame before the names of their own relatives. But Madeleine looked taller and more regal every moment, standing on the pinnacle of her degradation. Even as she spoke, the sisters moved a little towards each other without waiting for permission.

"Helen," she pleaded, "let Mr. Musgrave do everything for you; you mustn't attempt to do it yourself." Basil had stepped back, but Madeleine took care that the words reached his ears, and

his alone. Then she spoke in lower tones ; she wanted to know Helen's plans. Would she leave the hotel at once ?

The judge, who had waited, surprised at his own patience, interrupted ; he had something further to tell the prisoner. He had made an impression of partisanship both on Burnett and Musgrave, the only Englishmen present. But he was hardly to be blamed for it : it was due to the office, which the law imposed on him, of questioning the prisoner. He now informed her that the law directed him to introduce her to an *avocat* who would conduct her case. He therefore presented her to M. de Salis, a young man whom he had brought with him for the purpose. He also told her that there was no distinction between an *avoué* and an *avocat*, as in France.

The lawyer clicked his heels together and then he bowed.

"I will obtain all information that will be useful, Mademoiselle, and will come and see you in the morning."

Madeleine looked at him with all her sensitiveness sharpened by agony and summed up his measure.

He belonged to a different world, but she thought that he would prove painstaking, intelligent, and deeply interested in her case.

"I have no doubt that you will give me every reason to have confidence in your ability," she said formally.

Her tone was a dismissal ; she had still something to say to Helen, and time was very short. As she had crossed the garden she had heard the news shouted in the street that Ladysmith had been surrounded. That meant that Willy, Jim, and her father were all shut up, beyond the reach of newspapers.

"Helen, if you can keep the news from reaching Ladysmith," she whispered almost fiercely. Helen nodded with loving eyes. Both the sisters were tortured by the publicity, the necessity of control before this waiting crowd.

"I will tell Willy and ask him not to tell father, unless he hears of it," she said at length. They pressed each other's hands, but neither spoke again.

"Je suis prête, Monsieur." Madeleine turned and bowed to the judge, who was still staring at her. Almost against their will the officials of the court had waited until Madeleine Leigh was ready.

CHAPTER IX

MUSGRAVE, who was longing to get to work and unravel this appalling mystery, must wait, because Mrs. Imes was in his charge. He had a very brief colloquy with Helen after they had left the billiard-room. He did not oppose her when she insisted on driving herself at once into the town, to see the prison authorities and give various orders affecting Madeleine's comfort. They talked on the way. He promised to see the judge and to find out if De Salis was the best advocate available. He had a friend named Chisholm in Lausanne, whom he had already seen, and who was the English consul. On the way back he asked very gently if she would like to make any fresh arrangements, or to go to a different hotel. He would have been surprised, if he had had time to think about it, at the answer that he received.

"Your cousin has been kind, she has arranged things for me. Do not let me keep you, you ought to see these people at once."

"You're quite right, I ought." He believed implicitly in obeying those whom he tried to serve. He had a talk with the judge, who told

him civilly and impartially a good deal about De Salis. He further arranged to call at the barrister's office at ten o'clock the following morning. By then it was nearly six; Helen did not want him, he resolved to go to Lausanne and see his friend. Then he remembered that his mother would be glad to see him and hear from him how things had chanced.

He found Mrs. Musgrave in a retired corner of the garden, where she was not likely to meet any one. She saw him coming, pushed a chair with her hand into a better position, a little nearer to her own.

"I have heard how it has gone; this is only the beginning, not the end, Basil. You will save her yet."

"Please God, yes." Then he told her a little about the inquest and Madeleine's brave farewell. He mentioned De Salis and asked if she could tell him the address of their Anglo-Indian friend, Chisholm. He was going out again; there were things to be done, people to be seen, and information to be collected. It was easy to see that, tired though he was—for he had not attempted to sleep that night—inaction was intolerable to him just then.

"You are going out again? Have a cup of tea before you go. Brenda is waiting with it upstairs."

"No thanks, I won't delay; tell Brenda not to wait, and don't either of you wait dinner. I shall probably dine at the club."

"Don't go to the club if you can possibly help it, Basil, nor yet to the Kursaal, for the next few days. They will be gossiping over this affair incessantly; why give yourself such unnecessary suffering?"

His gait was not less swift, but it was less hurried, than it would have been before this very rapid talk.

Mrs. Musgrave was left alone. She was a woman accustomed to self-control, and, normally, could control her thoughts. To-day she had felt that she had done all that could be done to help her son. She might let them wander. She let them rove at will, and they dwelt with revealing insistence on all the details of the last few weeks. Scene after scene rose up before her, but whether in the mountains or down here, upon the lake, the central, appealing figure was always Madeleine Leigh. Short skirt, alpenstock, or mauve satin and diamonds, it was always Madeleine's personality that triumphed. Startled by her conscience, Mrs. Musgrave began making amends for the wrongs that were only wrongs in thought.

How simply the girl had assumed a freemasonry between the two families, as people who would understand each other. How wise and true the thoughts which Basil had quoted once or twice as "Miss Leigh's opinion." How natural and unaffected the friendships which she had cultivated as part of their present life, spontaneously with Dugald, conscientiously with Brenda, perhaps most uncon-

sciously with Mrs. Musgrave's son. All of a sudden Mrs. Musgrave realised that she had never done justice to the girl's unconsciousness. Was it possible for a woman to look so splendid without realising her own sovereignty? Mrs. Musgrave was a woman of strong and deep feelings, likes and dislikes, which she seldom changed. She well remembered the cold dread which had laid a hand upon her heart when first she saw the stranger. Poor Mrs. Musgrave! she had watched, and dreamed, and prayed over her plans for such unnumbered years. All the force of a strong, reserved disposition had concentrated itself upon Brenda's future. Then Madeleine had come. Mrs. Musgrave had read her son's face the first time she saw them together. But she was just by habit; in the lurid light of the recent tragedy she saw everything afresh. Even the main actors in that strange drama scarcely suffered more that day than did Janet Musgrave. She had wronged in thought, she would have injured, if she could have, this girl whom Fate had stricken down so tragically.

One of Madeleine's graces had been her readiness to share her smaller pleasures with those with whom she lived. Only two days ago she had brought her own photo, asking if Mrs. Musgrave would care to have it. There had been some laughing competition among them as to which of the amateurs would take the best likeness. Brenda had won, Madeleine had been anxious to show her appreciation of Brenda's skill.

Mrs. Musgrave had slipped the photograph away in her own desk, not showing it to Basil. The desk lay on the chair beside her, she took it up and opened it, and something tumbled out. The picture which was shortly to appear in all newspapers in Europe lay before her in her lap.

It was a broad, strong face, the pencilled eyebrows adding to the haunting depths of the dark eyes. The features were long and regular, except for the chin. But for the chin, which was round and almost childish, they might have passed for the features of a grand and heroic woman. It was the steady, direct look from out the eyes which was most characteristic and gave the face its magnetism. That was the look which brave, true women all over the world noted, marvelling over the strange story.

They believed that she was innocent, but men who saw that face believed that she was guilty, and said she ought to be acquitted. They were glad that there were women who were yet strong and brave enough to dare everything for elemental reasons.

Brenda Musgrave was not in her room, as her aunt supposed, keeping guard over the tea. Nevertheless, she had seen her cousin come back and go out again, and knew he would not come. That afternoon it did not seem to matter, she had had more than enough to do and think about.

There is a tide, not only in the affairs, but in the lives of men and women, which they may take or lose.

Helen had had business letters to write when she returned from the inquest, tired though she was. The money question worried her; she must find some means of getting money enough to help Madeleine to the uttermost. Her husband had taken a good deal of trouble to put her in possession of full knowledge of his affairs. But the money was tied up, she could not touch more than a certain sum monthly without a good deal of correspondence. Brenda knew nothing about business, but she wrote the letters which Mrs. Imes dictated. Basil would have done it, and done it better, but Helen had many good reasons against asking him. Madeleine would dislike it if she borrowed money from him, and he would probably hint that he was ready to offer it. She thought he would not offer it, though she knew that her husband had borrowed from him before and would be ready to do it again. Madeleine would not like it; she knew this instinctively, though she did not yet know that he was in love with Madeleine. Nor did Madeleine know; her mind could shed no subconscious light in this direction upon her sister's. For Musgrave had concealed his passion and its purpose with unusual strength and unusual skill. Madeleine liked and trusted him, but in that direction she had been preoccupied with the two McQuoids.

When Musgrave returned, after a long and anxious interview in Lausanne, he found that Brenda had gone away. He heard it from the porter. He went up to ask his mother if such an

extraordinary statement could be true. No one had ever expected Brenda to be capable of taking an independent line.

"She has gone with Helen; she came and asked me to spare her, and I was only too glad to let her help. I thought you knew about it, I thought that you must have engaged the rooms for them; it seemed all to be arranged. Brenda said something about rooms for all of us, but I waited, as you had said nothing about moving."

"No, Brenda engaged the rooms. Now I come to think of it, Mrs. Imes did say that my cousin had been very kind. I had no idea that Brenda could be so capable."

Like most English people Mrs. Musgrave and her son had never sorted and arranged their ideas on character; they had not realised that the power to will and to do depends on the power to understand and see. Brenda's vision had been enlarged and clarified; she had been purged for the moment of self-consciousness and scruples. People are never really alive until they have made a venture. Brenda Musgrave had begun. She had shown that she was capable of taking an impression; it remained to be seen if she was capable of keeping it.

"I think I'll go and see them. Mrs. Imes may be anxious to know the result of my inquiries at Lausanne." His mother knew that it would be useless to ask him to rest, and merely sent her love to Helen.

It was nearly nine o'clock when he left the

hotel. He glanced up at the height on which stood the prison-house, which he had already seen, for he had driven there with Helen directly after the inquest. They had seen the wardress, who had spoken civilly, and said doubtless Mademoiselle was imprisoned by a mistake. If Mademoiselle was accustomed to a *femme-de-chambre* she would be happy to supply the deficiency.

He paused and looked towards the prison for a moment, and then he heard the clock strike nine. Had Madeleine heard that? He remembered how she had stated that she heard it last night before she went into the billiard-room.

At that moment Madeleine lay in the darkness trembling with a horror that she could not control. She had been lying still for a long time, praying that she might sleep, when the clock struck. She had paused to count the strokes, even as she had paused to count them twenty-four hours before.

Basil went on to the new lodgings. He was shown into a sitting-room, where Brenda was reading beneath a shaded lamp. She got up and greeted him ; there was a good deal of dignity and quiet sympathy in her voice and manner.

“ I thought you would come round ; sit down and have some coffee. I persuaded Mrs. Imes to go to bed early, but I will send Donnet to tell her that you are here.” She seemed to be quite mistress of the situation. He sat down on the opposite side of the fireplace.

"How did you find these rooms?"

"I came over in the morning. It is quite close to the place where Madeleine is, but you cannot see the building. I was anxious, for Helen's sake, not to be actually within sight of the building. There is a splendid view of the mountains in the daytime."

"How clever of you to manage it! Find out if Helen would like us to come over here, or if she would rather be alone."

Word came that Mrs. Imes had already gone to bed—she sent him her love; a message which slightly shocked the sober Donnet—and hoped to see him in the morning.

"Shall we disturb her if we talk? It's rather a rest to sit here and chat. Have you any more coffee?"

He lit a cheroot and began to talk, ascertaining first that the smoke would not penetrate to Helen's room.

"I have been to see Chisholm. He tells me we couldn't do better than De Salis, and speaks highly of the judge. You might tell that to Mrs. Imes. It's hard work, Brenda, acting with these people; they think the worst of that poor lady."

"They do not know her, Basil." Brenda's voice was gentle. He began to talk more openly than he had ever done before. He gave vent a little to his feelings about the inquest.

"The judge was civil and impartial enough when he spoke to me in private; he wasn't

impartial upon the bench. It's this confounded system. It's his duty to ask questions, but he tried to hound her down like a grand inquisitor."

Brenda saw at once that he could not speak of it, and yet could hardly turn his thoughts to any other topic.

"Tell me a little about the procedure. What is the next step. Is there anything equivalent to our trial by Grand Jury?"

"Yes, before the Tribunal d'Accusation, but they say that in this case it will be merely formal; they are absolutely certain to bring in a true bill."

"And after that?"

"After that we hope it will not be very long, three weeks or a month, before the trial proper."

When he got up to go she saw with pleasure that he had stayed nearly an hour chatting and smoking.

"It's very clever of you to have managed all this," he said; "we can none of us do enough for these poor ladies."

He had started. Brenda stood at the door watching, longing to call him back, and she bethought her of another question.

"Basil." He turned immediately at the summons, and wondered afterwards a little bit why she had asked that question then.

"Basil, do you suppose this will get into the papers? Will Jim hear of it in Ladysmith, for instance?"

"He can't know it yet, at all events. Why? Were you thinking of writing or sending a cable? For heaven's sake don't cable!"

"No, nothing definite, but Helen is very likely to consult me; I wanted to know your opinion."

Basil wondered over the incident as he got into the cab and then speedily forgot it.

What had become of Jim while all these things were happening? Just about the time of the murder he strolled round one evening to Willy Imes, who was in a different part of Ladysmith. Willy was writing letters. He looked up and asked his brother-in-law to come inside, and whether he had seen anything of the Colonel. He thought there was something wrong by the way the young man stood there talking nonsense and joking about the number of comforts that were sent him by different English women at home. Willy wondered if he were nervous. They were expecting a night attack, and the sense of expectation told heavily on most men's nerves. Willy had a good deal of respect for a man who was nervous and concealed it as well as Jim did.

"Care to see Helen's last letter?" said Helen's husband, producing it. He scarcely ever showed her letters.

"Oh, just tell me the news," replied Jim, equally considerate. "Does she mention Madeleine? She's a girl who writes regularly, but she never tells one much about herself."

"Helen speaks of her more than once; she is

in splendid form, making no end of a sensation at Montreux. Helen is bursting with pride about her, and really I don't wonder. She is one of the handsomest girls I ever saw."

"Fact is, Willy," broke out Jim impatiently, "I can't get it out of my head there's something wrong with Madeleine. I dreamt I saw her last night in a circle of rosy light, with blackness behind her; it was the blackness that was horrible."

CHAPTER X

BASIL Musgrave admitted to himself in his own language that he was "up against a big thing" and did not as yet know how to tackle it. He could manage the work; he knew pretty well what had to be done and knew how to do it. There was plenty of it, and that was fortunate; but when all was done that he could get into every day, what had he, after all, that could bring him up to the level of his lady? Of Madeleine in prison, bearing everything without bitterness and without reproach, stitching bravely for the prisoners at the war, arranging chrysanthemums and fern leaves in a bowl, writing gallant letters to her brother and Colonel Leigh, Musgrave felt that there was something he dared hardly touch and think about in that life in the prison-cell.

There was the work, at all events. He turned back to that, as many a man has done in a crisis. He interviewed Swiss judges and British consuls, he interviewed the police, the landlord, the concierge, the *femmes-de-chambres* and half the servants in the hotel. He studied law-books, ransacking libraries and files of newspapers for precedents in criminal procedure. On the day

that Madeleine was arrested he was almost wholly ignorant of Swiss law of all kinds. Within less than a week there was scarcely a detail of technical information that he had not mastered.

It was almost as a last resort that Basil Musgrave interviewed the station-master at Lausanne. The *avocat* had been before him; there is no distinction in Switzerland, as in France, between an *avocat* and an *avoué*. He found the station-master ready with his own evidence, and ready to produce certain porters and other officials. He drew blank at first; Lausanne is a large station and the traffic is considerable, especially in October. At last the man in charge of the cloak-room mentioned a man whose behaviour had struck him as peculiar.

"What was he like?"

"C'était un monsieur anglais."

"Grand?"

"Mais tous les monsieurs anglais étaient grands. Il voyageait dans un grand manteau d'Inverness."

Then it turned out that this travelling Englishman had arrived about seven and left a Gladstone bag; he had returned and claimed it a little before midnight. The *grand manteau d'Inverness* was buttoned up to his throat, and a soft felt hat crammed down upon his head. He had taken the midnight train up into the mountains. It did not seem possible that this could be the murderer. That the murder had been committed before nine o'clock was clear. Would an escaping criminal have waited about for three hours in the im-

mediate vicinity of his crime? Musgrave recognised all this, while noting silently that this man's behaviour had impressed the railway officials. It had impressed them; it would be going too far to say that it had aroused their suspicions.

The young laird's guardian, who was also the lawyer and principal trustee, came out in time for the funeral. His name was Jenkins. Musgrave had several long talks about the dead man with Mr. Jenkins. He was a kind-hearted man, horror-struck, both at Dugald's fate and the accusation against Madeleine. He had heard about Miss Leigh, he had taken some trouble to learn about her in his capacity of guardian. From everything that he had heard he wished nothing better than that his ward should marry her and settle down at once. Of course he did not believe the popular story.

"It is just one of those stories which sound so probable in the newspaper, when nobody knows the parties concerned.

"There's something working in all this," he continued. "It may be Providence, but it looks uncommonly like the devil. 'Verily, thou art a God that hidest Thyself.' Her staying there so late, for instance. What more natural? One of my own girls, one of your sisters, would have done the same thing for exactly the same reason. Of course, she wanted to avoid the billiard-players, but I'm bound to own it looks confoundingly suspicious. Any decent barrister could make

something out of her staying late with a British jury. They'd understand him, and people would say the British public are so confoundedly sentimental. Glad we are sentimental. We're a great nation because we are governed by our hearts instead of our heads. One often gets a great deal nearer to the truth by believing in human nature than by disbelieving in it."

Clearly the old man's feelings were overwrought. It had been a terrible blow; he had sons of his own, but the young laird was a special and favoured son. The boy had spent his holidays in Mr. Jenkins's house, and had kept his dogs there, and his books and pictures until he set up his own rooms at Oxford.

Musgrave felt as though he ought to be more interested in Dugald, whose personality, now that he was dead, gained in interest, power, and pathos. He had only one thought and object in listening to everything that Mr. Jenkins said. Did this bear upon the case? Did it shed any light on the strange and terrible mystery in which Madeleine was enshrouded? That gay, wonderful voice, those speaking grey eyes never left him for a moment in all this detailed work. Yet he tried to be just, to speak of Dugald McQuoid in the way that was due to him, and do anything he would have desired.

Musgrave listened to a good deal of shocked and sobered talk from the Oxford undergraduates. They had been very fond of McQuoid. No, he had never been the leader in any set, but a lot of

fellows would miss him. They always had the feeling that he was the kind of chap who ought to have got married and settled down early, and then they would have come to stay with him and helped him to kill the grouse. He had wanted to go to the war, but they had all done their best to dissuade him.

"It was rather difficult, sir, you'll understand, when he could not help seeing we were mad to go ourselves; but it would not have done. Of course McQuoid had pluck enough for anything, but he wasn't the man for it."

Musgrave was half startled at the way they called him "sir"; it made him feel so very much older than they were. He almost regretted that he was obliged to ask them if they knew of any one who had a grudge against Dugald. They denied it indignantly, but he insisted on bringing them back to the subject persistently and patiently. He made them feel that it was for McQuoid's own sake that he must know everything, and then they agreed to help him. Only by accident, when he took them into his room, did they discover the immense amount of work that the civilian was doing. One of them looked at the pile of papers on the writing-table, then he asked if he could be of any help. After that they were keen to help him. Couldn't they act as amateur detectives and track out the villain, whoever he might have been?

"You could help me very much. I have got this pile of papers to look through, for one thing,

on Swiss criminal procedure. Then, if you will come with me later, I have permission to interview the police who were on duty in this part of Lausanne."

One fact which looked slightly suspicious was elicited from his interview with the police. Dugald had been seen wandering up and down the road running along the borders of the hotel, and speaking to a man who had begged from him, until the Scotsman had repulsed him rather roughly, giving him money at the same time. Then, later on, a man had been seen following him; this was probably the identical beggar. Both were wearing long cloaks or ulsters, which concealed their figures. Musgrave remembered the traveller wearing an Inverness who had been seen at the railway station.

After some days a pedlar was discovered at Genoa who owned that the Scotsman had given him money. Was he wearing a long cloak? Yes; he showed an old ulster that had been given him by an English traveller. But he denied having been to the station at all that night, and could substantiate his denial.

All these things seemed to do very little to bring Basil nearer the lady in the prison-cell.

He had made up his mind, after a good deal of inward conflict, that it was his duty to go and see her. There was nobody else; she would hardly allow Helen to come at all, saying quite honestly, and with justice, it tried them both too much. Then he knew, somehow, that his mother and

Madeleine were not much in sympathy, and could not imagine the reason. He felt he could do little, but he could make it clear that there was some one ready to serve her to the uttermost. He could satisfy the authorities by using Imes's name as having left his womenkind in Musgrave's charge. The first time he was a good deal relieved to find flowers on the table as well as books and needlework. Then he realised how Madeleine's personality had done her best with the room, but it remained a cell.

She was sitting in the window working when Basil came in; she looked up and smiled. Then they began to talk, the man doing his best to resist the temptation to look at her all the time. Presently she asked whether any news had been heard of the murdered man's friends or relatives. He told her about old Mr. Jenkins, and how much he had liked him, and of the favourable impression, too, that he had had of Dugald's friends from Oxford. "We carried the pall between us; they were good enough to allow me to help them," he said simply. Then there was a pause: they were both thinking of the strange loneliness of Dugald's life and death.

"I know nothing about his kinsman, cousin, uncle, nephew, or whatever he may have been," continued Musgrave, "but he has gone out to the war; it may be some time before he hears the news."

The matter-of-fact suggestion that Alan had gone out to the war changed the atmosphere of

Madeleine's prison ; she talked brightly and grew so witty and amusing that Musgrave gazed at her in amazement.

During the week that she had been in prison she had been tempted to ask herself why he had not come. Most temptations that work evil mightily are temptations of thought, and the struggle is in the mind. But she shrank, even in thought, from making any claim on one who held her dear. Questioning brought no answer ; she had held herself resolutely in silence, refusing either to think or wonder.

But now the tension was relieved, and that by Basil Musgrave's simple statement : he had gone out to the war. She was glad she had not allowed herself even to think reproaches ; the explanation was fully adequate. He had told her, or as good as told her, that he loved her, and that he was coming to Switzerland to ask her to be his wife. Would he not expect her, of all people, to understand that he must go directly he heard the trumpet-call ? He would write in time, but he might have been prevented before he started, and then the letter would be delayed. A three weeks' voyage by sea, four or five weeks might elapse before she heard ; sea-postage was so uncertain. And then, indeed, might he not wish to show his confidence in her to the uttermost, and let her hear of him through his deeds ? It was a wonderful pæan of hope and confidence and thanksgiving that rose from Madeleine Leigh's heart. The effulgence of its glory radiated in

her smile, making sunshine in that gloomy place.

Musgrave saw it, not daring to believe his eyes, and went away feeling devout and thankful. They both slept well that night, and when they did not sleep the watches were filled with bliss too deep for thought! Was Alan sleeping? Was he at that moment speeding out to South Africa, as all the world believed? What country held him, and what sea abandoned him, and whether in earth or hell, or in the parts beneath the earth, what sanity or madness filled that brain and heart? Many a man, both in fiction and real life, has mistaken the signs of love for another for signs of love for himself.

Two days after this Basil rushed over to Oxford in response to a telegram from one of his undergraduate friends. He thought he had found a clue. He did not send particulars, but begged the civilian to come. It was quite abortive. Musgrave bitterly regretted the valuable time that he had wasted.

Basil had called at De Salis's office the day after his return to Lausanne. No need to question his whole-hearted interest, he was positively enthusiastic about his case. He greeted Mr. Musgrave with the news that the trial had been fixed for that day fortnight. Musgrave was startled, though he could not justly complain that there had been any unreasonable hurry. He had the strange sense that an impending tragedy was rushing down upon Madeleine Leigh, and

that all they who loved her and would have died to save her were powerless to prevent it. De Salis told Mr. Musgrave that he had virtually made up his mind as to the line they would pursue.

"I should like to have a chat with you, Monsieur, but I think we shall agree there is but little choice. Mademoiselle is wonderful. If there were any evidence in her favour I should advise her to plead innocent. But there is none whatever. Her own account of her talk with the porter was utterly ill-advised; she must plead guilty, and I explain (*moi-même*) the reasons for her conduct. I think I can promise her a free pardon. It is unfortunate that she did not do it at the inquest but that little matter can be explained away. Every woman and every man of honour will understand her wish to keep the matter secret."

"There is only one difficulty," said Musgrave quietly. "I do not believe myself that the prisoner did it. Will she consent to the course that you propose?"

Basil marvelled at this man. The barrister shrugged his shoulders; somehow Musgrave hated him for doing it, although he felt that he was unreasonable.

"The alternative, Monsieur, is twenty years' imprisonment."

Musgrave was silent, and it was the barrister who began the argument all over again.

"It is not the part of you or me, Monsieur, to inquire into the abstract justice of the case. It

is for us to see to it that this young lady does not suffer over twenty years' imprisonment. This is the way to save her. Imagine to yourself the crowded court, the jury, and the judges. The question has been put; the prisoner has just made her confession; not a whisper can be heard. It is then that I arise. I bow to the judge and ask leave to say a few words in explanation. Then I tell the story. Every one is listening, feeling the force of every word I utter. Gradually, as the narrative advances, you feel that the sentiment of the court is changing. Then, when I describe her horror, astonishment, terror, the snatching up of the stiletto—— If the prisoner faints—and she surely will faint—it will add to the climax of the situation.”

This was only a specimen of the talks that Basil endured during the next fortnight. His friend Chisholm, the Consul-General, came to see him and told him that clearly the right thing was to get a woman to go and talk to Madeleine.

“My wife will do it if you like. I can tell her everything that's necessary; she knows most of it already.”

Of course Basil went to see Madeleine again as soon as a good excuse presented itself. It was his duty to go. De Salis had insisted on it, urging the importance of her friends uniting and endeavouring to make her change her plea to guilty. The *avocat* had repeated, over and over again, that the alternative was twenty years' imprisonment.

Any fair-minded person ought to feel a good deal of sympathy for M. de Salis. He had always known that English people were mad, but he had not expected them to be as mad as this. Musgrave was deeply puzzled. He could scarcely blame De Salis, if he thought his client guilty, in trying to save her as best he could, but he did not believe that the course suggested was the right thing to do, or that it would answer in the end. Still he admitted De Salis's contention that the prisoner ought to realise the choice before her. That the *avocat's* knowledge of Swiss juries was far greater than his own he could not deny.

"Il y a encore quelque chose, Monsieur. A blue apron has been dragged to light from the dark-room, and it is soaked with blood. I had intended to make a good defence out of her dress—all the front is stainless—but what would you? the apron accounts for that." And he went on to tell how the maid Donnet had been induced by the opposing counsel to admit that she had cut off and altered her young lady's train. "And in addition to all this there is Mademoiselle's own account of her interview with the porter. Ma foi! the Procureur-Général [Public Prosecutor] has an easy task! I could be ready to envy him. I assure you, M. Musgrave, all my friends and brethren in the profession smile when I tell them the reason that Mademoiselle assigns why she had stayed so long in the dark-room alone."

Now that he had reconciled his conscience to the

idea of going to see her in prison, Basil looked forward to the visits. He knew that they helped her; and they had some long talks together, and he found himself really getting to know her better. Sometimes she was merry, and they would arrange the flags in the map of the war which Mrs. Musgrave had sent her. At other times she was serious, and would talk openly and sweetly about her strange situation.

"It is what some modern writers would call amazing," she said one day; "but there must be some reason for it, if I can only have faith and courage and patience to wait until the meaning explains itself."

"I am sure you're right," he answered. It seemed impossible, when she talked like this, to suggest De Salis's way of escape. "If I may say so," he added, "I cannot help admiring your attitude in the matter, it is so free from bitterness. Are you never indignant? You never seem to feel it." Basil, unable to contain his own feelings on the subject, moved up and down the room.

She paused, and looked through the prison bars at the double grating to the sky beyond.

"I think it is easier because there is nothing personal in the whole matter. The thief and murderer, whoever he may have been, is not wronging me—he does not even know me. If it was a friend—if you, for instance, had done it and hidden—I should have found it much harder to forgive. At least, I think I should; but no one

has ever done me a serious injury before, I know so little about forgiveness. No one, of course, could go on for ever dwelling on the little grudges of daily life."

She sat musing a few moments before he answered :

"If I can do any good to my neighbour without in any way injuring myself," he said, "I consider it my duty as a Christian to do it. A great many people don't get as far as that. But—forgive me for talking business for a time—De Salis thinks that you ought to make your own acquittal your first consideration. That you have been wronged is true, but this is an unjust world and you must right yourself, by whatever means you can. Has he spoken to you himself about it?"

Again Musgrave moved about the room as he finished speaking; he thought he made rather a good devil's advocate, though he fully admitted he didn't like the job.

Madeleine looked at him. "What do you mean?" she asked. "You cannot mean me to do the thing he suggested?"

"My friend Chisholm, the British Consul, begged me to tell you that he also thought it was your greatest chance."

He spoke slowly, the force in his words was due to the restraint that he was putting upon himself. He had agreed with Chisholm's view that she ought to know, and that she would believe him when she would not believe De

Salis. But if he did his duty he did it with the belief that Madeleine Leigh would never speak to him again. Talk of rising to her level, he seemed to be proving himself unworthy even to dust her boots.

Madeleine looked at him. Why did Basil Musgrave, Willy's friend, ask her to do things like this?

"Save myself in that way? save myself by spreading slanders about Dugald, who would have died to help me?" She spoke in the same dazed tone in which she had talked when she first heard that Dugald McQuoid was dead; then she pulled herself together and turned to face the man who was anxious to help her, but seemed so slow to understand.

"Do you really think I ought?" She was stretching her courtesy and patience to the utmost to understand his point. He had intended to say something formal, suitable, the thing written down for him in his part. He did nothing of the sort: he rose to his feet, struggling with the storm of passion that was throttling him. On the whole he conquered it, he only let out the things that would help her, and kept the rest locked up.

"I do not think so, Madeleine, I do not believe that there is any way through life save by going straight. There is nothing else to be done. I believe that on the whole it answers best in the end, but if it doesn't we have done our duty. But at the same time I am bound to admit that McQuoid would most certainly urge you not to

think of him ; he would say that, if he could return and speak. A man does not love a woman without being willing to bear far more for her than that, a rumour which would scarcely injure him. We would take care that it did not. Forgive me for putting this side of it for once ; I gave my word to tell you."

He would have said more, but Madeleine had taken up her knitting again and was looking at him, with grave, yet humorous eyes and slightly twitching lips.

"I see. Mr. McQuoid would have advised me to do that if he had been alive, but then he couldn't be alive under the circumstances, on the hypothesis, as learned people say. It's all rather complicated, isn't it?"

She went on knitting. He looked at her amazed, then laughed a little, and walked about the room.

"You're quite right," he said: "complications are a mistake ; they don't answer, and this would not answer in the end. When I think what you are enduring——"

He broke off with the fear that he was getting into the heroics. He adored her sanity ; it was more than sanity, it was divine wisdom, which prevented her from trying to see a single yard ahead.

"Well, good-bye then. I'm glad that little matter is settled ; I would do anything to help you. You know that, I hope?"

He held out his hand, but he held the one that she gave him a trifle longer than was necessary.

She had given it cordially. She wanted him to know, without saying it in words, that she could scarcely have done without him.

Basil had let loose the storm-wave of his passion, just in time to help her and carry her beyond the whirlpool. So it is not true after all that each has power to cast the other's soul into a furnace, but has no power to save.

One more attempt was made to shake Madeleine's resolution after this, and it came from the British Consul. He insisted that his wife was the proper person to see Madeleine, since no other Englishwoman was available. He meant it all in kindness ; he really believed that the girl was working out her own damnation through obstinacy, springing from false modesty and terror. He had great faith in his wife ; she would induce the prisoner to speak openly, and would help and comfort her.

He went to the authorities and gained permission and returned home exultant, feeling ten years younger.

"You are to go to-morrow. I am not going to tell you what to say, my dear, you know far better than I do."

After which he spent the rest of the evening explaining the arguments that she ought to use.

But Mrs. Chisholm came back the next day half-crying, and bitterly reproached him for having sent her.

"How could you make me go, Edward, when you had seen her? If I had seen her I should

never have dreamt of going. She did not say very much ; she stood and looked at me, and her face was very white, and her eyes grew darker every minute, until I thought she would faint, or even die, but knew that whatever happened she would not weep.

“Then she said, ‘You ask me to do that, and you are the only woman who has been to see me since I have been here!’ That was the only thing she said. Oh yes, I remembered all the things that you had talked about, and I could not say them ; they sounded empty, childish.”

Mrs. Chisholm was walking up and down, and spoke with a good deal of energy, reproducing his arguments in almost the words that he had used. “Possibly she was right ; that was one of the things you told me—a woman’s first duty was to protect herself.” The lady had come to the end of the room as she said this, and she turned and faced him. “I don’t believe that Madeleine Leigh ever discovered that she needed protecting, or ever will. I got out as best I could. She saw me to the door, though the wardress was there, and said, ‘I think you meant to be kind.’ She could not have shown more graciousness, more dignity, if I had been a princess—I mean if she had. But she shook hands with me when I came in. I knew that she was a lady directly I touched her fingers—no, I knew it before I touched them.”

The British Consul behaved exceedingly well, he did not say all the things that he might have said. What if Madeleine was a lady ! Did his wife

suppose that it was only poor girls who met with difficulties and troubles? In the end he admitted even to himself that there was something in the problem beyond the reach of his philosophy. It was clear that Madeleine's personality had triumphed once again in her need and weakness. He could even forgive his wife when she would "go on" about Madeleine; the thing interested him so much. He did not try to stop her or turn the conversation when, at last, she burst out triumphantly, "I am sure she has some inward strength and power and happiness that keep her going. I felt it after I had hurt and wounded her. I am sure she is a saint; she is one of those people who are so good that nothing really matters."

For the rest of her life Ada Chisholm, the Consul's wife, was very slow in offering good advice to others. Mrs. Chisholm was really a good woman, and horror at herself had opened avenues of knowledge, as it always does. If death entered the world by the pathway that sin had made, then life and light followed on the knowledge of personal sinfulness. He who fails to hit the mark has at least aimed at it, and is training himself to see, and it is sight that saves.

CHAPTER XI

THERE is something rather magnificent in the way the law-courts stand at Lausanne. On practically the same high plateau as the cathedral they are separated from the much older Gothic building by a smooth, unenclosed stretch of gravel. To the west there is a steep drop, with a low brick wall and a row of pollard elm-trees. The trees form a thick leafy roof for the spectators who stand waiting before a trial begins. From beneath the pollard-branches there is a magnificent view of the whole of the Genevan lake. All these things had a very real power and value for Basil as well as Madeleine. It was terrible in the prison, but it would have been far worse but for the one tiny glimpse of the mountains through the bars. They both knew at times that they had only to still the wild suffering of their hearts to feel the surrounding peace.

It was one fine day in November when the prisoner appeared before the court at last. It was a small and homely scene, and very seldom has the court been crowded as it was that morning. The prisoner came in quietly dressed in black, and watched the swearing in of the nine jurors.

She looked pale and rather reserved, almost as though she lived a life aloof from the scene around her.

All her friends were there, and almost all the English people round the lake had come to hear the trial.

The trial began with the reading of the indictment and after that followed the examination of the accused. There are three judges, but normally the president takes the chief work of examination upon himself. When the judge is finished any of the jurors and the counsel on either side ask further questions.

And then Madeleine realised in full that the chief part of the trial is the examination of the prisoner. She is not obliged to answer, but needless to say silence may tell heavily against her. It seemed to Madeleine that several days' hard work was before her when she faced the presiding judge. She did not like the work, but that was no reason for shrinking from it, or not doing it properly. The practice and habit that helped her most just then was that of doing things efficiently, if it were possible. Musgrave had, as we know, done his best to prepare her for the ordeal by fire.

The judge began by repeating some of the facts that everybody already knew. She was the daughter of Colonel Leigh, she was travelling in Switzerland with her sister, the wife of Captain Imes, who was now serving in South Africa. And then followed a very brief account of the murdered

man's history and his antecedents, and then questions as to the way in which he became acquainted with the prisoner.

The judge was extremely careful about details and seemed determined to know everything that had happened to Madeleine during the last six weeks. He then asked her many more questions about her relationship with the murdered man. This roused at once her courage and her reserve; Madeleine had time to think out her answers, for she insisted on her right to an interpreter. She threw a great deal of candour into her manner, answered quietly and carefully, but looked blank astonishment at any suggestion of anything more than friendship between herself and the murdered man. She saw there was no necessity for sharing that knowledge with the whole court. Reverence for the dead man's memory alone would have prevented that, apart from other motives. She stated that Dugald had said nothing to her at any time that all the world might not have heard. It was a true statement: those long talks over life in general and the young man's future could have been repeated on the housetop. Dugald's life had been marked by the poverty of limitations, that curious poverty which brings its own wealth, but by little that was secret or concealed. He and Madeleine had been drawn together by their mutual seriousness in facing life's problems. The only person present who really understood all she said concerning him was Basil Musgrave. He found himself wondering whether or no she

would ever have loved that boy in the way he wished. She had not loved him yet ; Dugald was not and could not have been the one man in the world for Madeleine. But surely any seed might grow and flourish on such a basis of sincerity and kindness. The incidents and ceremonies that attend the planting are insignificant, it is growth that matters.

The judge insisted on hearing every detail of the day which ended in that fatal evening. She told him fully, a sense of humour made her even exaggerate the details which she supplied. She might have gone too far, for her brain was excited and overwheeled with long confinement, and the colloquy was a relief. Musgrave stopped her ; she saw his hand resting on his chin, a signal which they had arranged.

Yet there was something graceful as well as witty in the way that Madeleine piled up all the details that the judge had intended to extract laboriously. When the lunch hour arrived every one admitted that the case for the prosecution had made but little progress. During the lunch hour all the English people criticised the continental practice of giving the work of examination to the judge. It was argued with a good deal of reason that it made it impossible for him to be impartial and judicial.

Madeleine rested for three-quarters of an hour, when lunch was brought her, and she saw De Salis. She told him simply that she thought she could go on as she had been doing, and hoped

that he was satisfied. He approved and left her, having the wisdom to see that she needed all the rest that she could get. Her back was up against the wall; they would strip and horsewhip with their hideous questioning, unless she was able to defend herself, by some means or other to keep their fangs at bay. And the only method that she knew was this calm, deliberate scorn rising at times to open humour, and even to fiery and biting sarcasm. Ah, the contrast between the calm of Madeleine's outward exterior and her inward sufferings! She was fighting less for the ultimate victory than for the conquest of the immediate moment.

Basil Musgrave managed to get leave to speak to her in the recess, and made her talk about the morning; he wanted to help her to unwind her thoughts. He brought up the question whether or no she should use her right to refuse information. He expounded the danger of using it too freely; it made people suspicious if they thought that anything was being held back.

"Shall I speak the truth and the whole truth?" she said, smiling. Her manner showed her trust in him.

"I should think so," he answered. "De Salis thinks you mad already, so a little more madness won't matter to any one."

They discussed the matter philosophically, almost merrily. Their humour was the outcome of sheer hard logic, and of that working together

that gives the sense of comradeship. Once she paraphrased one of his own quotations.

"If I can manage to speak the whole truth, without in any way injuring myself, I consider it my duty as a Christian to do it."

"Never mind Christianity; it's your safest and best plan, unless you see clearly at the moment that some particular admission may be dangerous. I'm not a lawyer, but I am a judge, and I know that a great deal will depend not only on what you say, but on how you say it. Keep your wits about you, and make as little mystery over everything as possible is a general rule."

"I'm afraid of not realising the consequences of what I say; it's part of my limitations—I cannot look ahead. I never could realise the second stroke in billiards."

"Never mind that; do the thing that seems best at the moment and never stop fighting. I believe it's a rule in life, everything seems to go wrong if we let ourselves stop fighting. Glad you noticed my signal. Wish I could do more to help you; may I give it you again?"

"Yes, do; there are moments when I could pour out a torrent of invective like any termagant of old."

So Musgrave stood with his hand upon his chin when her burning sarcasm threatened to mar her cause. For beneath the shadow of this overhanging horror these two had drawn near enough to hear each other speak.

In the afternoon one of the jurors, inspired as

he believed by a passion for justice, was determined to do his best to force the prisoner to a confession. It was the first time that he had served as a juror, and he considered that his duty was to see that guilt did not escape unpunished. There were men, he knew, who could be influenced by a woman and a beautiful woman; he was not one of those. He had, of course, heard the judge examining the prisoner and seen the points that had been missed. He extracted and emphasised facts from which he deduced Mr. McQuoid's devotion to Miss Leigh. He had seen that more could be made out of these than out of anything the murdered man had said.

"You say that you told him that you broke your knife, and that he went into Lausanne at the earliest possible moment and bought that engraved silver stiletto. I suppose you are aware that it was a handsome present; it may have cost a couple of hundred francs. Is it the fashion in England for young gentlemen to make such valuable presents to young women?"

Madeleine's feeling was that this did not bear on the question of whether she had murdered him or no, but she could feel the atmosphere in the court changing. People began to think that the love-story was a far more important element than they had realised.

The juror next succeeded in discovering that Madeleine knew some of the murdered man's family. She knew the Castle of Areverga; the

juror understood that his heir was his nephew. Did she know his nephew, or did she not? The questioner extracted the information that the nephew was not a child, but a grown-up man.

"Have you known him long?"

"About four years."

"Have you seen him recently, and how often?"

"I saw Mr. Alan McQuoid several times in Scotland this summer. We stayed at the same inn." She spoke in hard, metallic tones, remembering Musgrave's counsel to avoid mysteries as more dangerous than anything else. But it seemed so unfair that she should be questioned publicly about scenes in her life which had nothing to do with the matter in hand.

"Were you intimate with him? Did he, for instance, make you an offer of marriage, or are you engaged to him?" A shiver of excitement ran through the court; here was abundant motive for the murder.

No, Mademoiselle was not engaged to any one, and neither the murdered man nor his heir had ever made her an offer.

If she had been thankful before—one drop of comfort—that she had been spared the pain of refusing Dugald, she was more than thankful now.

But every one believed that love had played a part in the tragedy with such a criminal as Madeleine. She could not quite keep up the cold indifference with which she had begun, her

cheeks flushed with anger. Everybody was looking at her, her whole personality grew more highly vitalised as the day wore on. The juror's suggestion with regard to Alan had this effect, that it had influenced men's minds.

People were beginning to say that the woman must have murdered the man, though the motive was uncertain, and probably far less creditable than they had believed at first. Hard and cruel things were said about her, probably in her hearing as she left the court.

Before she left she had looked at each of the jurors steadily. A minority of four in her favour was sufficient to secure acquittal. The trial was expected to last three days; one of these had dragged its length to eventide.

CHAPTER XII

DURING the next few days Madeleine fought with the supreme energy which despair can give. All her powers were quickened, there was hardly a whisper in the court that she did not both feel and hear. The strain was great, and was intensified by the effort to show no emotion, an effort in which she succeeded on the whole. It was a constant struggle to keep her head above the water-floods, above the mist and spray and guide her steps aright. But one strange thing happened, and yet entirely in accordance with the psychology of such events as these. The more the prisoner gained in the great struggle, the more her personality and influence revealed itself, the more the indignation of the crowd increased. It appeared to be a self-evident conclusion that she had used her power for evil, since that power was great. They would have found it easier to forgive her, or to believe in her innocence, if they could have seen her in the prison-house when she was left alone.

When we face death or some real equivalent,

some real annihilation of the life we are now living, all the subconscious forces of our being receive a sudden summons and are hurried into the battlefield. We are alive at last, but we pay the debt in full for that extra spell of life in the hours that follow. Madeleine was wearied to the point of utter weakness and exhaustion every evening, but she rallied when the morning came. After her own examination was over she stood still in silence, motionless, save for the dark eyes, which followed every word. Until this trouble came upon her no one had ever spoken of Madeleine's eyes as dark. Basil Musgrave, ever watchful to see what he could do, sent her an urgent letter. She was allowed to receive it in the prison on the morning of the second day. He congratulated her again on her behaviour, said that it had made the best possible impression, begged her to rest consciously when not obliged to speak. So she stood there silently, looking like the model of Botticelli's "Fortitude," the hands resting upon a sword-hilt.

All the evidence was heard with interest ; none of it could be accounted purely formal. The porter was the first. The facts that he detailed were too tragic and too recent to have lost their power. A good many people did not know that he had spoken to the prisoner in the garden, shortly before midnight, and that she had begged him not to go into the dark-room. Every one who did know of it turned to his neighbour with surprise and remarked, " Didn't you know that ? "

There was no doubt about it, the whole court was very much alive from first to last.

The next witness to be called was Dr. Burnett, who deposed simply as to the nature of the death-wound. He had no hesitation in stating positively it could not have been self-inflicted. "Could such a blow so immediately fatal have been dealt by a woman?" asked the President of the court.

"Under certain circumstances," which he detailed on being questioned, the doctor decided it was not impossible for the assailant to have been a woman. He said that it must have been delivered from above: the murdered man was very short, shorter than the prisoner.

"If he had been leaning forward towards the lady," questioned the Procureur-Général, "she might have raised her arm and dealt the blow over the victim's shoulder, thus?" The doctor replied that it was not impossible, and then turned to answer the questions of the jurors.

The greater part of the morning had been taken up by Madeleine's examination. It was after twelve, and when the doctor had finished the court adjourned for *déjeuner*. A note had been put into Musgrave's hand with a message that De Salis would be glad to speak to him. He had opened the note as he stood in the place that he had secured near the prisoner. It so happened that the prisoner glanced at him just as he opened the letter, and she read his face. Some terrible harassing need for decision had come to him who

had shown himself so true a friend. She knew that the note was probably from De Salis, that zealous *avocat* who made such queer suggestions. She managed to catch Basil's eye and give him a look of frank trustfulness, an assurance that she would be satisfied with his decision, whatever the difficulty might be. She was saying plainly, "It will be all right, whatever you settle. I am convinced of that."

Musgrave got up and went out. How in the name of the Almighty was he to do the thing he ought to do?

He went straight to a hotel and asked for writing-paper, and then read De Salis's note over again.

"You are the next witness; you will have to appear directly the judges return to court. I am counting on that which you tell us to undo the fatal effects of the porter's evidence. It is fortunate that Mademoiselle told you so distinctly that she had asked the porter not to go into the dark-room, and begged you to go yourself and begin looking for her brooch. It will be better for you to admit this slowly, in answer to my questions, instead of producing it at once. I write to beg you to search your memory well beforehand. It is important that you should repeat the prisoner's words accurately, and not vary when cross-examined."

There was a famous discussion between Andrew Lang and Jowett as to whether a man of honour should perjure himself to save a woman whom he

had wronged ; but neither of them ever ventured to suggest that he would dare do it for a woman whom he revered. Even the cavalier poet knew that he could not really love if he loved not honour more. Arguments are easy and songs are easy, but nothing is easy in the furnace of actual life.

Basil, at any rate, dared not trust himself to read the letter over again ; he wrote the reply at once. M. l'Avocat had misunderstood him. The prisoner had used no such expressions as he supposed ; she had told him exactly where she had spent her evening, and her reasons for staying so long in the dark-room. She had told him, too, that she had lost her brooch, and doubtless, as M. l'Avocat would point out, for a lady to say that to a man of her acquaintance was equivalent to asking him to go and look for it. But it was impossible for Mr. Musgrave to tell the court that the prisoner had asked him to go into the dark-room. After he had sent the note the whole force of the suggestion returned with strange, insidious power.

Was it one of the lost legion or an angel of mercy that kept on whispering the opportunity was not over ? It would not be over until he left the witness-box. His honour ! He had always thought of it as his one possession that really counted, now it was a thing of straw. The struggle after the victory is always the hardest, though, strangely enough, very few people are aware of that. We have men versed in spiritual

psychology, who claim to be teachers, who never think of teaching it.

It was then, in these moments of utter weakness, that Brenda slipped into the room and coaxed him to sit and eat.

Brenda, who had come over to the court to see if Helen would be wanted, had watched him, as she always did. Perhaps she knew, perhaps she guessed. Brenda had pondered the whole case in her heart for all these many weeks.

They went back into the court, and when Basil had finished giving his evidence De Salis was in despair.

And as for Brenda, Brenda was too busy to think that afternoon; she kept thought at bay.

The production of the apron was one of the most sensational events of the whole day. Madeleine acknowledged it at once; she had left it hanging up in the dark-room, as she always did. The murdered man must have clutched at it in his struggle, as men clutch at anything in moments of utter need. And while this was happening Basil left the court again, for Brenda had come back, bringing Helen with her. She whispered this to Basil. He turned round and looked at her; something had altered Brenda very much of late. She looked so quiet, attractive, and effective in that grey coat and skirt with the hat that matched. She whispered that Helen wanted to know if her evidence was likely to be wanted shortly. Helen was very anxious, per-

haps it would be a good thing if Basil would come and see her in any case.

"I don't know what I should do without you, Brenda," he said, after they had made arrangements for Mrs. Imes. A great deal of the fervency with which he spoke was due to the struggle through which he had lately passed. Brenda half divined this; she saw, at any rate, that all these things were trying him to the uttermost. Since Madeleine's arrest the little half-developed girl had been trying to merge her personality in that of others; she had met with a rich reward, and she had not had experience enough to know that the hour of trial was likely to be close at hand.

Basil relieved his heart and mind by talking everything over with his cousin, except De Salis's suggestion. They had already come to think more of what the verdict was likely to be than of the hope of an acquittal. He told her about the questions; in Swiss law-courts the judge propounds certain questions to be put to the jury.

"De Salis has the right to challenge and speak about them, but I think he means to reserve his final efforts for the verdict."

A horrible dread had filled Brenda's heart while he was speaking, she could hardly wait until he had finished.

"Basil, tell me, is the worst possible?"

"No, thank God. I believe the death penalty is utterly impossible on circumstantial evidence. It will be a life sentence probably, though De

Salis thinks that he can get it commuted to twenty years. De Salis is always something of an optimist, or else perhaps he exaggerates his own powers. I can say these things, Brenda, but I can't believe in them, or realise what they mean; there must be some way out. Twenty years for her! How old do you think she is? Twenty-two or twenty-three at the outside."

They parted at last. He was much better for their talk; he was learning to rely more and more on Brenda.

Meanwhile Brenda, having disposed of Helen, started off to walk in the direction of Montreux. She wanted a walk after the long strain of the day, and this was the only smooth road where it was safe to walk in the afternoon when the light was fading.

The sun set at a quarter past four; it was half-past three when Brenda started along the lake. It was almost the first time that she had walked so far alone, but she was gaining in independence. She thought over the great change that had taken place in her relationship to Basil during the last few weeks. He had made the discovery that she was a woman, a companionable woman to whom he could turn. His trust in her would grow as his sorrow deepened. She marvelled to think that this new happiness had come out of Madeleine's deep and bitter suffering. Was it fair? She questioned her conscience; she had done nothing towards Madeleine save what was right and fair. Yes, it had been right, a duty

to help Basil as well as Helen; she had done nothing unfair.

Walking like this, she turned a corner and came within sight of the Hôtel Royal. It stands some little way above the lake, for the sake of the view, in its own gardens. The gardens and vineyards belonging to the hotel straggle down to the very borders of the lake. Just where they end the road divides, the right-hand fork pursuing a smooth, level course onwards past Vevey towards Montreux. The left-hand fork takes a sharp turn upwards and runs along the borders of the hotel gardens.

Brenda took the road up to the left and mounted steadily, without looking backwards. She had resolved to turn presently and watch the sunset. She knew by the lights that were already glowing on the mountains to the south that it would set in splendour. She knew where she would turn—a spot in the garden wall where she and Madeleine had often come together in the evening. They had never come so near to making real friends as they did when they sat together watching the sunsets.

The wall was rather broken; it was used as a natural, if unauthorised, exit from the hotel grounds to the road. It was the nearest short cut to the station; the broken wall served both as a seat and a stile. How often Madeleine had made Brenda take the lower seat and swung herself up on to the wall beside her! It was one of those instinctive little acts of kind-

ness of a thoughtful, enthusiastic, energetic nature.

Brenda took the lower seat again instead of taking the place where Madeleine had sat so often. She leant her head upon her hand and began thinking; she was glad to do it; she had been living at high pressure with little time for thought during the last few weeks. And as she sat there thinking, or rather dreaming, she began kicking the stones idly at her feet. There was a great, loose stone that had fallen from the wall quite recently, and Brenda was resolved to move it. It resisted all her efforts; she began to think she would have to get down and push it over with her hands. It was a very dark stone, and looked peculiarly black and malignant against the road and dust, and she took it as a symbol of the great dark problem against which they had all butted their strength in vain. Who was the murderer? That was the riddle on which they had spent themselves, and it still withheld its secret. Brenda went over the evidence again carefully. She was still faced with the same solid, impenetrable wall of ignorance and misleading facts at which she had stared the day after the murder. Time had made no chinks for any ray of hope.

The sun had touched the outspread lake below, a mirror of golden haze. Lausanne lay in darkness. There, amid the darkness, Helen Imes had just been summoned into the witness-box when Brenda moved the stone. . . .

I think that Helen, beautiful as she always was, had never held herself more nobly than she did that day. The likeness between the sisters was striking, for they two stood alone against the whole world. They were both in black, but Helen's beauty had disappeared, giving place to the splendid pallor of an avenging deity. But Helen was brave and powerless; she had no kingdom to rule over, but, mistress of herself, she walked with regal majesty. Madeleine saw it, and understood; not for all the world would Helen show a trace of shame to see her sister humbled.

The judge noticed and misread it; it needed imagination and sympathy more than is common towards the accused. Who was this probably perfidious Englishwoman to enter the law-courts in such a sort as this? How should he guess that Helen's brave manner was masking the anguish she suffered at hearing these questions about Madeleine.

Helen deposed quietly and rapidly as to the friendship between her sister and Mr. McQuoid. There was nothing unusual, nothing in their walks that exceeded in any way the conventions of English life. She did not know if he was in love; she had thought so at times, but he was three years her sister's junior, and it was quite unnecessary for any one to take such boyish devotion seriously. She said other things, both spontaneously and as a result of the questions that were put to her. But what she said did not

matter, the thing that really mattered was the effect that she made on the president and members of the court. We have seen what that was. The president began to use his right to question the prisoner further as Helen left the witness-box. She was about to leave the court, but she turned when the judge began to speak, and moved forward and stood by Madeleine's side. All the court was watching Helen; the effect in every crowded corner of it was electric and instantaneous. There was almost a howl of fury. This was an act of defiance against the judge as well as against the sympathies and verdict of every one in that crowded justice-hall. When we are out of touch with those whom we are judging, whether as a mob judges, or with the consciousness of intellect, the simplest act of innocence can rouse screaming fury. Helen had power to make them feel, and she, thinking only of standing by her sister, had used her power unwittingly. "*Vox populi est vox Dei*," the anger of the people and of destiny had reached its highest against Madeleine Leigh.

The judge's questions were short and to the point; he had no real wish to inflict needless torture, but it virtually amounted to summing up against the accused. He forced Madeleine to repeat all the most damning portions of the evidence, and there was little to set against it. It was one of those cases in which all the facts are on the side of untruth and faith alone endures.

"You are intimate, I think, with another young

man, a Mr. Alan McQuoid, who is the dead man's heir?"

"Je ne suis pas intime, il est un de mes connaissances," said Madeleine proudly, forgetful of the interpreter, or else unable to endure more delay. Somehow all that followed was infinitely less hard to bear than it would have been if she had stood there alone.

The president of the court, sitting in the middle between his two assessors, announced the three questions.

I. Did they consider that the Englishman Dugald McQuoid had been murdered in the dark-room of the Hôtel Royal?

II. If the answer was yes, did they consider that the murder had been committed by the prisoner whom they saw before them?

III. If the answer was yes, did they consider that any extenuating or aggravating circumstances existed?

Madeleine's face grew perceptibly prouder and more beautiful than ever, but otherwise she did not change. The gloom was gathering in the court, the high pallor on her features made them shine from the darkness like a Greek statue of carved ivory. Helen stood behind, a dark, watching shadow, transformed into an agony of supporting comradeship.

After the questions were announced there was still time for the prosecuting counsel to address the court. It was a long and powerful speech, driving home the points that every one had heard

and remembered against the prisoner. It was so easy to lash oneself into a fury of righteous indignation against the beautiful and heartless siren. Madeleine listened to every word, but with a new calmness; and considered it dispassionately as though it affected some other person. The truth was that she was numbed, and she could count and analyse the blows that fell on her, but she felt their force no more.

The culminating point of the rage against the sisters had been reached when Helen stepped to Madeleine's side. Basil, who knew that he was standing in the dark, just outside the sacred intimacy, felt thankful that it was so. The day ended in gloom, but none of these three were quite alone and comfortless when they left the court. On the morrow De Salis would speak for the defence. The jury would retire and the verdict would be given. If the prisoner were found guilty, both the learned counsel would speak again on the question of the punishment to be inflicted. De Salis had made an attempt that afternoon to get the questions altered, but without success. He had pointed out that the questions allowed no possibility to the jury to find a verdict of "Not-proven." That, he knew, was his strongest argument; it was just possible, after all, that Madeleine had not committed the murder.

The Procureur-Général had also been aware of that argument, and he attacked it with some vigour. The only assailant that his learned

friend opposite had even suggested was a common thief. But he begged to remind the jury that the gold watch and chain had been untouched. Would a tramp who had come in to look for a diamond brooch have committed murder and left all valuables untouched? Moreover, was it likely, then, that a common thief would come across the garden and through the billiard-room on the chance of finding a diamond brooch? On the other hand, the jury must consider that very important evidence of the English doctor, an Englishman, and therefore naturally favourable to his country-woman. This and much more besides: the Procureur-Général understood his duty, and did it thoroughly and with a will.

There is something satisfying to our primitive instincts in covering a she-villain with showers of stone and mud. The Procureur-Général went out of the court, secure of his verdict, and thinking and talking about his speech concerning the punishment.

"I wish one could really give her a public horse-whipping," he said to a colleague; "it's much worse than I had imagined. She must have lured him in there on purpose, and had her stiletto ready." Thus they yelped and barked on an ebbing tide of self-righteous anger that Madeleine had ceased to hear.

What had become of Brenda all this time? Was she still sitting thinking upon the grey stone wall? It might have been about the time that

Helen went to stand with her sister that Brenda slipped down from her perch. Her tired mind had refused to work, and somehow the sight of that black, unconquerable stone lying there annoyed her. She pushed at it with both hands, rolling it over nearer to the wall and sitting down on it in triumph. Leaning her back against the wall, and resting her face on one hand pensively, she began to watch the sunset. She had made up her mind she would allow herself just this one half-hour of dreaming, and then let matters alone. She had just reached the point of thinking of all the seeds that she and Basil would sow in the garden in the spring-time—seeds in the garden and plenty of common bulbs in the orchard, daffodils and crocuses. Nothing looks so well as a Devonshire apple-orchard in the spring-time thickly strewn with daffodils. Brenda turned again to look at the view ; the sun was setting in gorgeous pageantry. Like strophes and anti-strophes, the colours were taken up, and re-echoed in the mountains with fuller-developed glory. If great things were to happen, no more splendid pageantry could even be imagined than these magnificent sunsets. And somehow or other Brenda always imagined that great things were going to happen when she was thinking about her cousin.

Brenda glanced down at her feet ; she was wearing brown Russia-leather shoes, and something lay between them. It was something dark, yet shining ; it must have been lying underneath the

stone; it lay exposed and bare. She kicked the chalk over it at first, then she stooped down and picked it up, shaking the dust off it carefully. A dark blood-stone seal lay in the girl's hands, the seal bore a peculiar crest and motto: "Dieu et la main droite." Brenda had seen that crest and motto often in Dugald's signet ring. "Dieu et la main droite,"—it had been the habit of the McQuoids to trust to their own right hand to do them justice.

There is nothing more appalling than the speed with which temptation rushes into the human heart. It is the stampede of wild cattle, breaking down the hedges which custom, civilisation, and prudence raise. It leaves the lands exposed, the unruly herd of swine hurls itself into the possession of the citadel. Brenda was arguing, reasoning, thinking, with terrible, resistless logic as she stood there motionless.

"Dieu et la main droite." Some one with the right to bear that crest and motto had crossed the wall of late. It was not the murdered man; his watch and chain had remained intact, part of the evidence against Madeleine. Brenda turned it over and saw the letter A. on the other end of the little seal. Brenda remembered that Madeleine had spoken to her once of Dugald's kinsman, and she had called him Alan. "Alan!" there had been something rather strange, to Brenda's fancy, in the way that Madeleine had used the word. Was this the man that Madeleine loved? Brenda had known that some other earlier love kept Made-

leine back from Basil. Was this the man she loved? Brenda's heart and mind were over-leaping obstacles and out-stepping logic. Surely the news that set Madeleine free from prison-bars and walls would free her heart as well. Then she remembered that the lawyer and trustees who expected news from Alan McQuoid were waiting still in vain. Who would have thought that Brenda would hesitate for an instant at the chance of setting Madeleine free? She had been day-dreaming for half an hour, pouring out on the ground all the slowly gained strength that had been stored for sacrifice. There is nothing more appalling than the hurry with which temptation stampedes the human heart. It descended upon Brenda, burning up for ever more all confidence in herself and in her own righteousness.

Brenda never knew how long she stood there; it might have been half an hour or an hour. It was certainly an hour that Helen stood motionless and almost happy by Madeleine's side. Brenda could not leave the spot. More than once she tried to raise her arm and fling the trinkets into the sea. She tried to move, she got up once and moved about restlessly beside the broken wall. She could not leave it. Down below in the darkness she heard the fog-horns of the trams which wound their way along from Vevey. The lights were coming out all along the lake, Montreux was waking up to life and fellowship and gaiety. Brenda alone sat still in the darkness, glued down and fastened. And in front of her,

looking out of the darkness, she could see nothing but Madeleine Leigh's face, radiant, beautiful, as she had looked on that fateful night. One sentence that she had heard, and one that she had imagined were taken up and repeated in Brenda's heart and brain.

"There is no death penalty." "She never loved him." All the yelping host of demons took up the cry. "There is no death penalty," and "She never loved him." The words were re-echoed by ten thousand fiends.

The clock struck six. At the hour of six Brenda knew that Madeleine would leave the court and return to prison. Basil would be watching, and their innocent, beautiful Madeleine was being led away as a felon. Brenda gasped with horror, she rose to her feet, the hand that held the trinkets was raised. If she could do something, if there was only something that she could do, she would escape from the temptation. She made the sign of the cross; all spells can be broken and all demons forced to fly by making the sacred sign. She gave a gasp of relief; the slight movement had set her brain working; there was something further that she could do. It was something real this time, something to be done instantly, and that if successful would save them both alive.

"There may be heaven, there must be hell;
Meanwhile there is our work here, Well!"

Yes, there was something to be done, but it was a longer and harder task than she had understood at first. Time slipped by unheeded, but

Brenda Musgrave was still on her knees in the dark-room. By the help of a lantern she was peering into every square inch of soil, looking for some links of a golden chain. The chain must have been broken during the struggle. The struggle must have taken place in the dark-room, and if she could find the links the proof would be complete. But the space was very large; the cellar ran back nearly a hundred feet under the mountain. Both dead and living men could have hidden there for a couple of hours. Every now and again she found that the soil which she sifted through her fingers was dark, red, and clotted. Shuddering with horror, turning aside for a moment, she still pursued her task with unrelenting fury, fury against herself rather than against the murderer. She might have sought for help, but the one thought in her mind was that she must herself offer propitiation for her sin and selfishness, work out her penitence and her own salvation. What did clots of blood or anything else matter? Hour after hour she was ready to go on working through the age-long night. It needed nothing but tenacity of purpose, diligence, and the will to suffer to save Madeleine now. She had wrested permission to go into the dark-room almost by force from the hotel proprietor. The great elemental powers of love and suffering abide in every age, making the world go round, renewing its youth and performing miracles.

CHAPTER XIII

IN the darkness of the cab Brenda wondered why she had not telephoned to the house at Vevey. When her cab drew up to the door she could hear her friends' movements in the upstairs sitting-room ; it was a mild evening, one window was slightly open. Some one, wearing silk, rustled across the room : that would be Helen settling herself upon the sofa ; some one else was putting coals upon the fire. Then she heard Basil running downstairs rapidly ; he had been on the lookout for her and had heard the wheels.

It seemed odd to Brenda that her cousin should look just the same as he stood there with the light behind him ; everything else seemed changed, but the thing that was really changed was her life's purpose and its driving force.

"Is that you, Brenda ? we wondered what had become of you. Mrs. Imes was just sending me to search the lake."

Basil, seeing that something had happened, went on talking gaily as he followed her upstairs and opened the door for her, saying, "Here she is."

Mrs. Musgrave looked up eagerly from her seat by the fire, and Helen left the sofa and drew the girl towards her, kissing her warmly once or twice. Their hearts might be torn and broken on Madeleine's account, but that made no difference to their concern for Brenda.

And Brenda herself? She had a vision of her future life in that instant, she accepted it and faced it gaily. These people loved and valued her, she was able to do things for them, and make their lives happier. Wasn't this enough? To ask more than that from life was surely to squeeze the orange dry. The others, looking at her, noticed that she had grown almost lovely with that new radiance and ease of manner.

Though interested in her news, they were more interested in herself; she had lifted half their burden, that great and awful sense of utter hopelessness, before she told her story.

Brenda, returning Helen's embrace warmly, drew her down on to the sofa again and began to speak spontaneously. In the cab she had planned out very carefully and accurately how she was to break the news.

"Sit down, dearest. Can you bear a little happiness? We shall save her yet—I have the proof complete."

"Good heavens! what can you mean?" It was the man who spoke; Helen, white and trembling, asked with her eyes only. Brenda laid the gold chain and the blood-stone seal on the table and kept her hand on them for a moment. Then she

broke down utterly, pushed them across to Basil and sobbed out the words, her head on Helen's shoulder.

"Here is the gold chain and seal with the McQuoid crest, the wounded hand and the French motto. It cannot be Dugald's. You will remember that Dugald's watch and chain were untouched, unbroken. It must be Alan McQuoid's, and I found these links which match the chain in the dark-room itself. Alan must have been in that dark-room, and, Helen, we know that Alan was the heir, and that he hated Dugald. I saw him once when some one spoke of the young laird, as they called Dugald in Scotland; I am convinced that Alan always hated him.

Helen, who thought she knew Madeleine well, did not know her last secret, and burst into tears of joy. Brenda pulled herself together immediately, and so did Helen, and they looked at each other with exactly the same thought in their eyes. It was Helen who put it into words as she stood upright, ready to walk into Lausanne at once.

"Is it impossible to get the good news to Madeleine to-night?" asked Helen; "that is the first thing to be thought of."

Basil looked at the clock; it was nearly nine. He took up the watch and seal, but there was nothing to be examined, nothing further to be learnt from them.

"I will go out at once and try to see the Governor of the prison," he said, "and I certainly

must see De Salis. If he's in bed I'll have him out, though I knock the roof off; we shall have a lot to do before ten o'clock to-morrow."

"No need," said Brenda. "M. de Salis may be here any moment, I telephoned to him from the hotel."

"You 'phoned to him from the hotel?" said Basil, looking at her astonished and amused, like one who has discovered a new creature with unknown ways and habits. "It takes him rather a long time to get used to me," thought Brenda, piqued, but amused withal.

Helen spoke like a child. "I think I must go and tell Donnet," she said; she had a warm feeling for her maid.

"Go and tell her," said Brenda, "and do ask her if she would make me a cup of English tea. I've had no dinner."

Helen loved nothing so well as making tea for people and taking care of them; the maid and she were very happy.

"That last was a stroke of genius on your part, Brenda," said Basil, going up suddenly and kissing her, as Helen left the room. "Tell us how you found these things. You have told us nothing."

He had drawn her to him fondly, and stood with one hand resting on her shoulder, making her turn her chin round so that he could see her face. Mrs. Musgrave, who had sat quietly watching, sharing every one's happiness, got up and left the room, saying something which bore on shutting the bedroom windows.

"Mother, don't you want to hear the story? Brenda's just going to tell it," called Basil after her. But Mrs. Musgrave bustled out as though she had not heard.

When Helen came back, after about five minutes, her face was quieter, she wore a hat and veil.

"I'm going with you," she said; "we can start immediately, as soon as M. de Salis comes."

But Brenda wouldn't let them wait for M. de Salis; she said that she would stay and give him all the evidence.

"If there is any little thing you want me to do for you, such as marrying you, Brenda, name it here and now."

"Thanks awfully, Basil; I should love to have a wedding, if we could arrange to get married for just a single week."

"Children, do be sensible," said Helen, smiling. It must be rather nice, she thought, to be such friends as that. Imperious though she was, she had never had a friend to whom she could talk as Brenda talked to Basil. And then, just as they were talking like that, M. de Salis was shown into the room. It was extraordinary the change in the atmosphere that M. de Salis made by simply standing there. He said nothing at first, but there was something ominous in the silence in which he listened. Then he gravely, but rather ironically, bowed to Brenda, who was terribly alarmed. He congratulated Mlle. Musgrave upon the originality of her discoveries. It was useful evidence, valuable evidence, he might almost say

invaluable evidence, but nobody could say that it was conclusive. Suppose, for instance, "que cet autre M. McQuoid" had sold his watch and chain, or that it had been stolen? then the seal might have been dropped by the thief or by the man who bought it.

"But I am convinced it was Alan," said Brenda slowly, unconsciously voicing a strong intuition. "You do not know, there were strange, very strange stories about his doings in South Africa."

Good, that was evidence as to character; it was a great thing, indeed, if Mademoiselle could produce some really reliable evidence as to character. But it was impossible to forget that "le Procureur-Général était un homme fort habile;" and then remember that the three judges and the jurors were much incensed against the prisoner. De Salis stayed some time; he ended by saying that he believed the judge would allow the evidence to be produced.

Madeleine's four friends passed a night of fear, unrest, anger, and consternation.

What had become of Madeleine all this time? It was nearly three hours since she had left the court. She had returned to the prison, but on that last evening she did not spend the time resting, as she had done before. She did not think that she needed it; the last hour of suffering, which she thought she did not feel, had given her new vitality. She could have talked and laughed lucidly, even brilliantly, with that strange power that comes when pain turns to stimulant, as

men have talked and laughed and worked out problems upon the rack. But Madeleine had a busy two hours before her; she was resolved to set her house in order, like one about to die.

She washed and changed her dress—she always took off the dress she wore in the court—and slipped into a velvet tea-gown. It was an odd pride of hers, that of continuing to change her dress each evening. Both Helen and Donnet had foreseen that she would do it when they packed her trunks. When settled at her writing-desk the gorgeous rich brown velvet and orange-coloured silk gave the room its character. It was no longer a prison; it was the place which Madeleine Leigh had made her own during several weeks.

She lingered for a moment to give fresh water to her bowl of chrysanthemums before she began to write. First she wrote nothing but business letters; there were some bills to pay and other arrangements to be thought about. She did not even know whether she could control her own income if she went to prison; the Colonel had settled a hundred a year on her, two years ago, when she came of age. His theory was that a grown woman needed some measure of independence if she were to develop her personality. Madeleine felt, in looking back, that she owed a great deal to his thoughtfulness; it had helped her to become herself. The Colonel had also taken care to put her into touch with a good

solicitor before he went out to the war. Madeleine wrote a letter to the solicitor asking for some advice; then sat down to think. First there were certain claims; she had a list of poor people, who were in some measure dependent on her exertions. She was accustomed to collect ten pounds a year among her friends to pay for a boy in a cripples' home. There was a chance of its falling through now that every one was occupied with the soldiers and their wives. She wrote a letter about this to Mrs. Carnmoney, who was a rich woman, compared with herself, and who had no immediate claims at the seat of war. Like many modern girls, Madeleine enjoyed attending to business and wrestling with account books. She felt much better as she wrote her letters, made entries in her ledger, and added up her sums.

"I suppose I can go on collecting for that boy in prison," she mused, "and have the money sent to me. It would be rather good fun." She laughed at the idea of acting Lady Bountiful from the walls of a convict cell.

Madeleine was only interrupted by the entrance of a tray with dinner, of which she rapidly disposed. But the pause and act of eating made her realise how very tired she was after her long day in the court. She went back to her letters, made a vigorous effort, finished them, and tied them together with pink silk ribbons. The ribbons had been intended for her underclothes; they suggested by contrast the thought of a

convict-dress. "I do hope," she murmured, "that, whatever else happens, I shall be allowed to wear my own underlinen."

It was only a quarter to nine, and Madeleine sat down to rest and think before she went to bed. All the little things on which she had been engaged brought back the sense of strangeness in her recent life. Was she really Madeleine still? Was it Madeleine Leigh who had been stripped and horsewhipped before a seething crowd? How they had yelled and hooted! But it was not herself whom they had adjudged in this fashion; it was some different being. She felt sure of that. They had mistaken her for a vulgar murderess, but the true Madeleine Leigh had crept out of sight. She was glad to think of that; they had not managed to storm her inmost citadel in spite of all their fury. She had felt it all deeply: the confinement, the degradation, the shame, the scorn, the railings; she had felt it, but she had conquered. They had not touched her inmost being, though they had deprived her of many of those things wherein is the life of the spirit. She felt herself deprived of the "residue of her years," of love and hope and comradeship, but she possessed herself. She stood as she had stood on that night when Basil had seen her coming from the very gates of death, with all her past and future setting and circumstances swept away from her, and nothing left but inward life and truth. What does it matter if our circumstances be changed, and our possessions and

position he swept away, so long as we retain our own souls at last?

Madeleine dressed herself with even greater care than usual the following morning. Then she had her breakfast and waited for the post, expecting Helen's daily greeting to arrive. It came as usual, but it had been written before Brenda had returned with her wonderful news. The judge had given orders that no communications were to be made to the prisoner before the evidence was produced.

Madeleine was standing in the prisoner's dock, a little wearily, waiting for the end. Then the president of the court announced that he was going to make an exception to the general procedure. Fresh evidence had been discovered in the prisoner's favour, and though it was not usual to produce it at that stage of the proceedings, he was going to allow it to be produced. Madeleine heard him patiently, but she felt it could make no difference in the end—she almost wished that he had not allowed the evidence. Those foreshadowings of the mind to which she instinctively trusted were gloomy; there was no gleam of hope.

But Madeleine's interest was aroused as by a thunderbolt when Miss Musgrave was called into the witness-box. Brenda told her story succinctly, quietly, and without varying a single detail. There was a deathly silence, everybody throughout the court was listening, not a sound escaped. She showed the jewellery, she de-

scribed her finding of the seal and then her search in the dark-room. And the president of the court, sitting between his two assessors, watched the prisoner carefully. She was standing with her head thrown back, her eyes starting from out her head, off her guard at last. Just as Brenda reached the climax of her story Madeleine interrupted with a low cry, holding out her hands instinctively for the jewellery.

"Alan, Alan! so he did come out here after all, as he had promised. Alan, Alan!"

"Do you mean that you expected him?" The president of the court was down on her at once, extorting a full confession. She was powerless in their hands, for she had virtually admitted everything in that single cry. During the night a fresh search had been made of her possessions, and a letter from Alan had been discovered. It had been set aside before as being of no importance, but it announced his intention of coming out to see her. And then De Salis put Musgrave into the witness-box to prove that Alan had not sailed in the *Cymric Castle*.

Madeleine did not hear this, for she sat like one in a dream, utterly stunned and paralysed after Alan's letter was read out in court. Then, when they were about to begin asking her further questions, they saw that she had fainted. She was carried out of the court. The jury returned a verdict of "no" to the question about her guilt. They ought, strictly, to have waited for her return, but there are times when all red tape

can be set aside. Her splendid physical vigour had sustained her through the suffering and the confinement, but this was more than physical. Madeleine had realised that neither Brenda nor the judge, but she herself, had signed Alan's doom.

CHAPTER XIV

It is time, at last, to ask what had become of Alan McQuoid while all these things were happening. The only thing to do is to go back near the beginning, and tell his story in straightforward fashion.

Alan had left Areverga shortly after Madeleine and her father left it. It had seemed a sudden, inexplicable movement to his old, new-made friends, such as the Carnmoneys. It was simple enough really. He had done his work, that difficult piece of destructive, dirty work which his master had assigned to him. In the days of the guilds the master craftsman exacted a high degree of finished workmanship from those whom he called his labourers or his apprentices. And the workmen rendered it, putting perfect carving on the underside of the miserere seat. The devil expects no less of finish, perfection, and thoroughness from his chosen labourers.

Having done his work, Alan could scarcely be blamed for looking out for something else to do. The fishing and the solitudes, the grandeur of the mountains, had lost their charm for him and drove him forth. We remember that he had

not been able to stay in the same inn with Madeleine while he laid his schemes. Now that she had gone her presence and her voice haunted him ; he could not endure to be alone. So he went to London, as we have seen already, to find occupation, and work out his destiny. In the Glen he could not even cast a fly with the same unerring lightness and precision. He believed, himself, that his power forsook him from the day of his fishing expedition with Colonel Leigh. These things frightened him ; they gave him the sense of helplessness, or rather the foretaste of his helplessness.

Having reached the city, Alan set about the only occupation that offered itself of making money. He had never served any of those apprenticeships which admit men to a profession, to his own great loss. We don't like work, nobody does ; but we like what is in work : the chance to find ourselves. But it is less easy, after all, when there is nothing that challenges a man's manhood in work itself. A poet of to-day insists that poetry should be called a trade because of the dignity of workmanship.

It may seem strange, perhaps, but Alan arrived at some conception of that dignity during the next few weeks. He was trying to make money for two worthy objects—independence and marriage with the woman whom he loved. He lived simply, and almost as ascetically as a monk, and denied himself almost every pleasure. Pleasure was expensive in more ways than one ;

he needed time, money, and, even more, the perfect control of every faculty he possessed. And more than all these he wanted to understand some of the secrets which separated him from Madeleine Leigh. He knew there was something ; he was getting nearer to her, but was not near enough yet to ask her to be his wife.

During the first few days after he came to London, though he was working very hard, it was all with the air of doing nothing at all, the air of a man completely master of his own leisure. He laid his plans with care, not calling on any one at all for the purpose of talking business. There were one or two big men in the city to whom he had introductions, but he did not use them. They were mostly out of town, and the seconds in command were not likely to be especially ready to welcome a stranger. But Alan had marked out a plan for himself during his night journey from Scotland, and he pursued that. The plan was a slow one, or appeared to be so, but in the end it proved to be extremely rapid. He wandered about getting known to as many people as he could, and always watching his opportunity. He was seeking some standing-ground on which to work out his scheme for making money by his knowledge of the mines. His ideas were large : he wanted to realise capital enough to make a start in England, possibly as a member of the London Stock Exchange. There is so little a man can do who has not been through a technical training of some

kind. The Stock Exchange is filled with men who wish to prove that courage and equanimity, an eye to chance and the spirit of good fellowship can take the place of technical training. Alan was only twenty-nine : he told himself repeatedly that it was not too late to make a fresh start. This time it would be in the capital of the world, with men who would appreciate his brains and other qualities.

About this time Alan received a letter which had some influence upon his career. It was from Jenny, Slogger Jim's girl, who had married surprisingly well in Johannesburg. This woman had loved him, and also understood him : she had shown her understanding and concealed her love. On one occasion, shortly after her marriage, she had told him that life was a hard battle, but harder for those who fought their destiny than for those who fought themselves. He had not understood ; but her husband, coming in at that moment, had turned suddenly and nodded.

Something had made The McQuoid go out on to the verandah, and he did not hear what followed.

"Go on keeping up with that fellow, Jenny ; it's just conceivable that you may keep him straight."

Alan, though he had his full share of conceit, had never been able quite to persuade himself that Mrs. Beaton cared for him ; still she went on writing to him and telling him all the news that there was to tell. She was, however, an optimist

by nature. She recorded as truly as she knew how, but she naturally laid unconscious stress on the things that seemed most likely to be true. Just about this time a wave of hope went over the Transvaal that Kruger would not fight. Jenny Beaton believed it, and she was a great friend of Joubert, who sought peace to the very last. She had friends, too, among the British capitalists, and knew that money would be forthcoming if it were needed. Surely the President would be fought with money! So she wrote to Alan that many things might happen: that it was quite possible Kruger would not fight. If war did come, it would be over in a month or two: Kruger might bluster, but in the end he would climb down.

Alan seized hold of the idea greedily, believed it heart and soul, and said he had known it always. Of course he had known it; that was why he had sent Colonel Leigh out for a harmless little trip to the Cape. All Alan McQuoid's manœuvres in the city were moulded by his belief that Kruger would not fight. He believed in it because he had to; he believed in it because it gave him such relief and such vitality. There is nothing like conviction: all the men to whom he talked were influenced by the force of his own convictions. Thus all things work together for good or for evil according to the main purpose of a man's life. Yet sometimes we may ask ourselves whether the man's sensitiveness counted for nothing; he could feel, at any rate.

Alan began almost to enjoy this new life of his and the many demands it made on him. Mind and body responded to the strain of work he put on them, and he felt the better for it. It was a new Alan McQuoid that he was discovering, a better personality, taking a different view of things. This was what he wanted. He had asked himself often: what would Madeleine ask of the man she married? In the old days she would have asked a standard of belief and fulfilment slightly above the ordinary one. He was sensitive enough to know that it would be useless, worse than useless, marrying her if he failed to satisfy her. How was he to satisfy her? Simply by taking up his life afresh and moulding it differently. He had always intended to do something of the sort when he could afford it; he intended it more than ever. He had always recognised that to be noble and generous, and win the praise of all men, was a pleasant, expensive luxury. He was beginning at last to gain some glimpse of what it would mean in self-sacrifice and rending. Oddly enough the vision fascinated him; he thought that he should like it, and intended to take up the life of a philanthropist when he had made his fortune. For the present, since he was in the middle of the game, he must go on playing after the old rules.

It was about this time that he wrote Madeleine the letter which reached her at Lausanne after some little wandering. It was a passionate and crafty letter, in which he showed his passion, but

always with the air of keeping himself under control. There was no declaration, but he told her quite truly that he had been detained in London by business connected with South Africa. That was the letter which added so much both to her pain and joy during those weeks in prison. That was the letter which was read out in court after Madeleine had lost consciousness of passing events, and before Musgrave was put into the witness-box. He also told her that he hoped to be free before the middle of October, and was coming out to Switzerland.

"You will not refuse, then, to let me tell you all that I have been wanting to tell you for so long. It was the fear of failure as well as the possibility of imminent war which kept me silent."

When Alan wrote that letter he had made up his mind that he could get engaged to Madeleine before the war was declared. Afterwards nothing mattered; if he were engaged to her and then he volunteered, as he intended to do, he knew that she would marry him before he left the country. Before the Boer War many a man went to his betrothed and asked the same question: Would she marry him at once or would she wait for his return? And the same decision was made unhesitatingly by almost every woman to whom the choice came. People talked strange nonsense about those hurried weddings: they said the man wanted to leave the girl his money, or she to bear his name, though only for a while. But the girl looked at things from a different standpoint.

How else can I claim the right to go out and take care of him should aught ill befall?

All these plans of Alan McQuoid's were brought to a sudden check by Kruger's ultimatum. He heard of it in this fashion: he had been working late one night, and pushed his papers aside to take some rest. He could get away in a week; in less than ten days he would be on his way to propose to Madeleine. The war would not begin just yet; it would come earlier than most people expected, but he could give it until November. He thought he would not go to bed yet after all. He might as well work out certain calculations. If he gave them his attention he would then be able to settle that night if he would be free in a week or no.

It was late, the darkest hour of the night, mis-called the morning, when he had finished his calculating. It was dark in his room. Something had gone wrong with the electric light; he was forced to work by candles. The silence impressed him. The great piles of paper which rustled when he touched them made the only sound. He went to the window and looked out. A hundred feet below, and probably more, lay the deserted pavement. The rain was falling, but falling so silently that it intensified the hush and gave no sound itself. If only the clock would strike! Men may watch all night, triumphant, certain of themselves and of their world, but the little testing hour, the hour that separates illusion from reality, comes before the dawn.

As McQuoid sat still thinking of these things he remembered a telegram that he had received that morning. He had been lunching with a city magnate when it was handed to him, and the great man had been talking, dropping words of gold. He had known what the wire was about: the result of a race which a friend had offered to send to him that morning, and so he had slipped it away into his pocket. He might as well look at it. He opened it mechanically, but had to read it three times before he took in its meaning. It had nothing to do with a contest between horses, but with a battle fought out upon a larger battlefield. Kruger, whom he thought he knew and understood, had at last done the thing that no one had foreseen. And Jenny Beaton, who knew and understood Alan, had sent the sum and substance of President Kruger's ultimatum. He glanced down into the street, empty and deserted; it looked as though it were waiting for that which was coming. Three hours later he imagined England waking up to the news that war had been declared.

CHAPTER XV

ALAN got out of some of his worst financial difficulties better than he had expected, but a good many remained, and to escape the most pressing creditors he went abroad almost immediately. He had no resources except his annuity; his share in the mines, his position as their manager, were useless and worse than useless to him now. There was no friend from whom he could borrow, and then his grandfather's trustees had told him before that they had no power to make any exchange for his annuity, or to let him compound for a sum down. The only man who would be likely to help him was his kinsman, Dugald, whose advances he had refused. The boy was not of age, and even if he had been he was the last man whom it was possible to ask. Yet there seemed to be no alternative between that and being publicly proclaimed as a defaulter. He did not attach any very definite ideas to the thought of the public proclamation. Everybody would know. The worst of egoism is that a man's personality looms so large he can scarcely see things in their true proportion.

Just about that time Alan was forced to think of

Dugald again by a notice in the papers. The laird had continued his adventures on the mountains later than was wise, and had just escaped an accident. His courage, rapidity, and decision at a crucial moment had saved a guide's life. The papers were barren of news at that moment, and the incident found its way into a corner of them. It had been a narrow escape for Dugald, and some details were given of his family and history. One paper added, "The heir to the young Scotch laird is his kinsman, Mr. Alan McQuoid, who was not a member of the climbing party at the time."

Alan could not help wondering whether his creditors had seen it, and knew that he was heir to large estates. Heir to them? He was undoubtedly heir, if aught happened to Dugald before November 30th. He could not help it. The thought shot into his mind, what might have happened that day upon the mountains? It was a thought which was almost bound to recur to a man in such straits as Alan McQuoid. He wanted to escape from it; he wanted to escape from his dilemma and from his own thoughts, from the whirling tumult of anger, and hatred, and jealousy, and fear, and mortification at his own failure. He wanted to escape. There was a way of escape opened to Englishmen in 1899. Some months before Alan had booked a passage provisionally in a South African liner. It was shortly due to sail; he had had no notice as yet stating that the arrangements had been altered.

Just before he started Alan received a letter

from a lady who lived chiefly in hotels and corresponded with a good many men friends. She was now spending a few weeks at Lausanne. She chatted merrily of life upon Lake Lemman and alluded more than once to his kinsman Dugald.

"He is your cousin, isn't he? I know there's a scandal; it ought all to be yours, and it all belongs to him. He is a tremendous favourite with one of the handsomest women we have out here. Her name is Madeleine Leigh. Don't be surprised to hear that a marriage has been arranged in your own family. She really is a most remarkable-looking creature, tall, with masses of fair hair. There is something very attractive about your cousin; his deficiencies are so pathetic. We should all be in love with him, I verily believe, but she admits no rival. One can't help seeing that her style of beauty would look extremely well in a Scotch castle," and so on, and so on; she even dwelt on the pathos of Dugald McQuoid's deficiencies.

These sentences raised Alan's blood to boiling-point. Should this unknown kinsman outdo him here—in this field—as well as in every other? Alan brooded over the matter deeply, during the night-crossing and in the train for Basle. That letter was one of the things that had decided him to go to Basle; it was the frontier town of Switzerland.

Alan lingered some little time at Basle; it was a good place for telegrams, he could get the first news of the war there. But the gist of the whole

matter lay in this : he could not make up his mind to go back or forward. The McQuoid, self-willed, unscrupulous, ambitious, was fighting with the Alan whom Madeleine Leigh knew. One of those crises which make a man's destiny was pursuing McQuoid, and had overtaken him at Basle. He would hear its footsteps behind him like the footsteps of the mystical Hound, tracking its quarry down. He heard it in the telegrams ; the news from the war revived his decision to go at once. The company had written to him, asking him to send the money if he really intended to travel by that boat. Then he realised that if he did that he would have to leave Switzerland almost immediately.

"And that in itself is a ridiculous thing to do, when I have just come here," he said to himself, yawning and getting up and looking out of the window. "Patter, patter," from behind the terrible necessity of decision was springing upon him out of the dark. Most men and women of the world who met Alan McQuoid thought him a strong man and an able one. But Cecil Rhodes, who needed men badly at that juncture, had looked at him once and then turned away.

"Better, far better to go a fortnight later and have a few days in town before I start." So McQuoid argued, walking about the room in his hotel, and going to the window and looking out. Then, chiefly in order to be doing something, he sat down at once and wrote to the family lawyers, informing them that he was going to the war, and

asking them if he could have another instalment of his annuity. Then, because he was sure that he was really going, he talked about it to the people with whom he had made friends.

At last he decided to go to the Lake of Geneva, and have a talk with Madeleine before he started. That would be enough ; he was sure that he could put an end to Dugald's little game if only he saw the lady. It would mean missing the next steamer, but what did that matter, after all ? He did not believe the prophets who had foretold that the war would be over in six months.

It was decreed by the Fates that Alan should spend three solitary hours at Berne, on his way to the Lake of Geneva. Three hours is long enough for any choice, however momentous, to rise fully before a man, in all its significance and all its details. The choice before Alan was whether to press forward at once and stop Dugald's machinations by claiming Madeleine's promise, or whether, listening to the warning voices which spake so clearly through every fibre in his being, to fly to England and thence to Africa.

He nearly turned and fled ; there are times when flight represents the highest courage as well as the highest wisdom. He had heard the trumpet call, and knew that if he turned and went to the war at once he would save his soul alive. But the devil also knew it, and, trusting no longer to side tricks and stratagems, brought his vanguard into action.

Alan landed at Berne at 10 o'clock in the morning, and, making inquiries, learnt that there was no train to the Lake of Geneva for the next three hours. After disposing of his luggage he went up to the bookstall, instinctively, as the first place at which to ask for news.

An Englishman who was standing there turned round on hearing the sound of an English voice, and pulled a telegram out of his pocket. Englishmen did not pass each other on the Continent without speaking during the days of the Boer War. Even English ladies of unquestioned position, and normally speaking of great self-control, sometimes turned and spoke to others whom they did not know.

"Do you care to see this, sir? It's a nasty affair; I was half expecting to see my son's name there." Alan took the cablegram and scarcely thanked him.

The words swam before his eyes as he read them, and to see them better he held the papers at arm's length, as old men do when their sight is failing. That was the troop he ought to have joined. Nicholls and Davidson, the first names in the list of "killed," were both his friends and comrades. That was Billy Davidson; that man had written rejoicing in his own commission and telling Alan to "hurry up and come along at once." He recalled the letter. Billy had referred to the envy and jealousy his great good luck had aroused. The glory and honour and triumph of it all had not lasted very long; it had lasted long

enough. He had ridden at the head of his men into a narrow defile or nek, and had not returned alive. And Alan realised that this was just the sort of post of danger, with little chance of distinction attached to it unless death conferred it, that he ought to have filled had he been on the spot to take it. "There'll be a great deal of this sort of thing before we're through, I'm afraid," said a voice beside him. The stranger held out his hand for the telegram; Alan bowed as he gave it him, and turned away.

"I wonder if he is Scotch," thought the stranger to himself. "He looks as though he had gone fey."

Alan went out of the station without knowing where he was going, and walked like a man in a dream. He walked some little way on the level, but when he found himself facing a path that led upwards he followed it instinctively. He went up and up, until he came out on one of the open terraces which have been the fitting background of so many crises in different human stories.

It was 10 o'clock in the morning; the afterglow of the dawn still rested on the Eiger, the Monk, and the Jungfrau rising before him in all their majesty. But there is something that causes a man to stand upright, like one realising the dignity of his manhood, as he faces the stateliest trio that the Alps can show. There was hope for Alan: he felt his own littleness, and he felt the contrast between himself and Nicholls and David-

son, who gave their lives cheerfully without a moment's thought. Somehow he wished that he too had risen to the dignity of a "perfect gentleman unspoilt by thought." The fear that had hindered had been the fear of making a venture, of risking everything. Alan McQuoid had, of course, heard of Swiss sunrises before, although he had never seen them. Madeleine had alluded to them in one letter in which she had asked his help about her father, but it was not solely or chiefly of Madeleine that he was thinking as he stood there, leaning upon his alpenstock, gazing thoughtfully across the valley.

He was sensitive to scenery, with all a Scotchman's sensitiveness. Thoughts, motives, ideas, and purpose, that did well enough under ordinary circumstances, looked small in that growing light. It may have been the scenery, or perhaps the consciousness of the great destiny, the great chance that offered itself. Alan McQuoid was thinking, reasoning, living, and almost ready to *act*, above his level on that morning.

He had seen that his chance had come, the chance to put aside his ambition and self-scheming and give his life for others. And to do this he must tear out of his heart, or at least cast down from their immediate sovereignty, the highest and lowest passions that he had ever known—his love for Madeleine, and the jealous anger, nourished for years, against the man who had supplanted him.

The struggle lasted a long while; he paced up

and down watching all the changes on those mountains in the distance.

He knew what was happening, the old historic choice was before him—the choice between life and death. He knew what had been the matter with him: in spite of all his energy he had been but a half-dead thing until that very hour. God was pressing, pressing unendurably, on brain and heart and will; he was alive at last. It would be no deceptive fancy which imagined the forces of eternity leagued in conflict around that lonely soul. He thought once more of Madeleine; over and over again her face rose up before him with all its haunting charm. But she was not alone; another face beside hers was one he had never seen, but that he should know at once. Yet Madeleine looked as she had always looked, gay, sympathetic, challenging, indifferent never, but independent always. She had a curious independence; her mind and will and conscience were still her own, although her heart was his. She had something on which to stand; he, too, must carve out some standing-ground that changed not among the things that change. He supposed that it could be done; if a woman like Madeleine could do it, then why not such a man as he was?

This was the high-water mark of the vision and insight that Alan reached in that tremendous hour. He saw and understood, but the impulse, the emotion, the desire were lacking, it was the will that failed. Pilate understood: Very few of

the great decisions in history have been made in blindness. Long—he did not himself know how long—Alan paced up and down, and still the conflict lasted. He thought sometimes of the war, but more often of the great things he would accomplish in the war than of his country's need. He turned his gaze southwards; the vision of Madeleine's face grew fainter and that of Dugald's stronger. He had seen the laird in the glen and had often heard described that large head, those deep, earnest eyes. He could not endure the thought of it. Women were sometimes attracted by misfortune, and Madeleine was generous and warm-hearted. Alan McQuoid was all alone; part of his choice was whether he should live and die alone for ever. The conflict ended suddenly; he heard a clock strike one single deep note, and then he heard no more. His train went at half-past one. He looked at his watch and saw that it had stopped; the time was slipping past. He must not stay there any longer. Subconsciously he grasped at a good reason for escaping from his solitude; he convinced himself suddenly that time was all-important, left the terrace, and plunged downwards into the town. The by-paths were blocked with snow; in places the turns were so sharp that he was obliged to steady himself with his alpenstock. At one moment he found himself directly above the railway-line, and stood there for a moment, appalled and fascinated by the sudden discovery that he could hurl himself upon the sleepers. In the future,

the near future, he wished that he had taken that strange way out before his fate engulfed him. It was part of his false reasoning that for long he persuaded himself that a Master-destiny had guided all his steps.

He certainly looked as though he had passed beyond his own keeping when he rushed into the station. He was a big man, as we know ; his felt travelling hat was crooked and was pushed backwards, showing the hair in front. His long, dark ulster was covered with splotches of snow which dripped and melted as he ran. His worried, breathless inquiries heightened the general impression of disorder and mental confusion. He learnt in reply that the train to Neufchatel did not start for another half-hour's time.

Alan McQuoid stood still and silent, as though he had received some sudden and terrible blow. He stood still on the permanent way, he offered no resistance when a porter pushed him hurriedly on to the platform. The train for London was coming in, and waited ; it may have only waited a quarter of an hour, but that fifteen minutes seemed to him interminable. Heaps of time, the Voice said, to collect his luggage, heaps of time to get his ticket, and jump into the train ; the door of a second-class carriage stood open absolutely in front of him, and that carriage was labelled Calais. In Alan's last illness, even in his better and saner moments, he was troubled with a curious nightmare. He used to see a train puffing slowly into a station, a train which would

not crush him, but pushed him deliberately out of the way. In the helplessness of his delusion the wretched man would spring up, shouting aloud Basle, Calais, Londres.

Owing to the delay it was seven o'clock and had been dark for more than an hour when Alan reached Lausanne. He disposed of his luggage in the cloak-room, saying merely that he would call for it again that evening. Then he had some dinner at the buffet, making inquiries, as he ate it, as to the way to the Hôtel Royal. He was not sure if he would stay there; he thought it might be better to call on Madeleine first, then to establish himself in the hotel. He need not decide just yet. In a town like Lausanne a man can get a bed at midnight, if he has luggage with him. As he ate his dinner he congratulated himself on having done the wise thing and come on to the Lake of Geneva.

In reply to his inquiries Alan had learnt that there was to be a *cotillon* ball at the hotel that night. He wished that he had had his kilts; if he had had his kilts with him he would have been tempted to change and put in an appearance at the ball. He wondered if Dugald wore them. A man who only measures five foot four in his stockings must look absurd in kilts.

Everything might have been well if there had not been a ball at the hotel that night. Alan, unfortunately, passed the windows of the ball-room and stood there looking in before he reached the doors. Just at that moment he saw Madeleine

come into the room, followed by the Laird of Areverga. He knew it was his kinsman—the kilt, the sporran, the broad, stunted figure all confirmed the knowledge. Just at that moment Madeleine turned towards him and smiled, and the two glided into a dance. The exalted fervour of Dugald's dark eyes was counterbalanced by Madeleine's tenderness in her anxiety to be just to him; her face was a study, for a great struggle was going on within. Alan instantly believed them to be betrothed. For a moment he saw a vision, a possibility of rising to the level of rejoicing in their happiness. The next moment he had turned away, and plunged into the darkness; the devil was fighting for his ancient rights. There is nothing more terrible than the speed with which temptation stampedes the human heart. Thirty minutes later the actual living body of Dugald McQuoid lay at his kinsman's mercy.

It happened in this fashion : Alan was prowling up and down the road, feeding upon his hatred. He had sucked it in with his mother's milk, and brave old Colonel Leigh had foreseen the danger. He was prowling up and down the long, white road, close to the billiard-room of the hotel, though he did not know it. Suddenly he noticed a man sitting on the bench in front of him, under the light of a street lamp. The big man's heart stopped beating. He had recognised once again the man whom he had seen in the ballroom.

Almost immediately that man got up, and Alan followed him, followed towards the billiard-room. In front was a dark doorway, an open door which seemed to lead away into interminable darkness. And the horrible, terrible force of his own evil imagination urged McQuoid forward. He had no weapon, and the laird's physical inferiority stood out in naked clearness. It was the thought that checked him until the laird stooped to pick up the diamond brooch. The most fatal move that Dugald made that night was in seizing up the dagger to defend the diamond brooch. He heard some one behind, and thinking for the moment it was a common thief, caught up the dagger in self-protection. Alan flung himself upon him, forcing the young man into the dark-room, before he struck the blow. The laird was armed—the physical inequality was done away at last. Strange sophistry of the human heart! He persuaded himself that his revenge was justified, because the laird was armed. The physical inequality was done away at last! Then, and not till then, did Dugald recognise his assailant, calling him by his name and closing in a struggle which compelled Alan to drag him away into the darkness, lest somebody should come before their fight was finished. The darkness was inexhaustible. Afterwards Alan McQuoid thought of it as the symbol of his own hatred.

CHAPTER XVI

THE two broken, half-triumphant sisters hurried away from Vevey as soon as it was over. They had a family consultation about it and decided to go to Lisonne in the neighbourhood of Biarritz. Madeleine said rather unexpectedly, "Is it Spain? I cannot go to Spain."

"We will go anywhere you like, my darling, but all the people here crowd to the Riviera or up to the mountains, and it would be nice to be alone."

How should Helen know that one of the papers had mentioned Spain as a hiding-place for outlaws? Madeleine had seen it, because a certain name drew her eyes like magic whether she would or no. Extradition treaties, it will be remembered, were accepted last of all in Spain.

No one was inclined to make mountains out of molehills, but the details of the journey had to be arranged.

Neither Madeleine nor Mrs. Imes were equal to travelling by day and night. Brenda suggested that she and Mrs. Musgrave should go on ahead

and take rooms for the whole party. This simple proposition cleared the air wonderfully. Basil congratulated his cousin warmly on her sound judgment and practical common-sense. Then, with his habitual thoughtfulness for others, he followed his cousin up to her own room.

"You're sure you don't mind doing this, Brenda? It's awfully good of you; it settles the whole question."

She was already kneeling before a large black trunk, of which the lid stood open.

"All right, I'm the other man of the party, you know; call on me if any help is wanted." She began moving about her little room as she spoke, putting this and that to rights.

"The other man! You're the deputy commissioner, and I'm only the insignificant collector."

Musgrave was still standing in the doorway, and he did not find it easy to come inside. Brenda was taking blouses and things out of her drawers and laying them on the bed. But he had been made welcome to her room so often, lately, that he still hesitated.

"Basil, dear, if we are going to start to-night! . . ."

He laughed, and filled in her unfinished sentence.

"You don't want the other man to help your packing. All right, call on me when you want the boxes locked." He whistled light-heartedly, and his whistling came back towards her, down

the whole length of the corridor. Brenda set her teeth; it requires a good deal of concentrated energy to pack boot-trees into boots.

"It isn't as if I had got unlimited space to pack in," was her only comment. Brenda had discovered that life is settled by the thoughts that each of us indulges in when alone.

Brenda kept a diary; it must be confessed that her nightly entries were neither striking nor original. But the diary had nice quotations of its own, and when Brenda underlined them it meant they fitted.

"This is life, after all; bearing burdens, trampling self underfoot, and going forward with never the demand that any soul should know."

As she packed she wondered if it would be possible for her to return to England when they got to Biarritz. She would not leave them yet; it was clear that they needed her at present, but were they likely to need her long? Taking herself into account only it would be infinitely easier for her to go to England. She had friends whom she could stay with for a time, and then why shouldn't she look for a situation? This train of thought sowed in her the germ of a wish for independence for the first time. Brenda did not know how far she had climbed up the mountain-side since she had been at Vevey. She had seen, like Dante, that sunshine was at the top, but had little expectation of being allowed to bathe in it.

It happened that during that journey southward

Helen discovered Basil Musgrave's secret. The thought came suddenly; it was something in the way he closed the door when Madeleine left the room. She marvelled first at her own blindness, and then marvelled still more at his forbearance and self-control.

She began to talk as they sat together over the fire, after the others had gone to bed.

"I cannot tell you how happy the thought has made me, Basil; it is a draught of happiness, sunshine, and sweet water in one after all we have been through." And she went on saying a great many things which were very sweet, but only reminded the man of the poverty of friendship compared with his need for Madeleine.

They were a happy little party on the whole that had travelled southwards and settled down by the Atlantic to the sound of discordant noises amid the roar of its breakers, and the softer murmurs of wind among the pine trees, loving, knowing each other, yet each with passages in their past and recent history of which they could not speak.

The days were so bright that they often spent long mornings on the beach chatting, working, or reading. There was always the war-news. The first thing to be done each day was for some one to read all the newspapers. They had to read the French ones, because of the telegrams, and then there was *The Times* and *The Daily Mail*, *The Standard*, *The Telegraph*, and *The Morning Post*. People are apt to be luxuriant and self-indulgent

in the matter of newspapers when the country is at war.

One day Helen came down and reported that Madeleine had a chill and seemed slightly feverish. Mrs. Musgrave, who visited the girl in her room, said that she needed several days in bed; there was nothing the matter, but she needed rest. A doctor was sent for. Mrs. Musgrave saw him before he saw his patient and told him the whole story. He used long words, but it came to the same thing: he commanded that the patient should stay in bed at present. After that Mrs. Musgrave came to be installed and recognised as Madeleine's nurse. She was glad to do it; her heart was singing with happiness, and happiness is the best of teachers. After three days the patient had so won her nurse's heart that they were friends for life.

It was characteristic of her that she did not resent the part of invalid, but accepted it quite simply. She had never learnt to worry. Mrs. Musgrave was afraid that she might learn it now that her nerves had been so tried. Her salvation lay in this: nobody offered her good advice, she was able to follow her natural instincts. She asked Mrs. Musgrave once if she talked when she was dozing. She was answered in the negative.

"You have said a word or two once or twice, but nothing consecutive. If you ever did, you may be quite sure that it would go no further. The servants do not understand you, for one thing.

Besides, nobody could be at all certain that anything was true that you said in that fashion. It might be or it might not be. Not a soul could tell."

Madeleine lay back relieved. It was impossible not to think of Alan, but it was wrong to worry. Sometimes, as she lay there, she would put her whole strength into clinging to this belief, that it was wrong to worry. People talk as though faith, practical, saving faith came by nature, with no need to wrestle for it.

So for nearly six weeks Madeleine lay and rested, attempting to do nothing, quite content to dream. All her power had been broken ; she had but little memory, would begin a sentence and forget it before it was finished. For this, among other reasons, she talked but little, but lay upon her sofa listening to the talk around her. She knew that it would take a long time before she recovered, and on the whole she was glad of it ; she was in no hurry to return to life. Little Mrs. Musgrave, watching, thoughtful, loved her more every day and understood one side of her. Finally she procured a picture of Botticelli's "Fortitude," and gave it to her son for Christmas. She gave it to him one morning when they were alone together.

"Why, mother, it is like—— Whatever made you think of it?" he exclaimed, with more pleasure than he had shown for weeks.

When Madeleine first came down Musgrave recognised the very first time that they were

alone together that he had got to establish a new relationship. Gentle, gracious, there was a new independence, not about her, but in her, like a living flame. Yet he found her very responsive when he tried to establish a friendly footing free from any love-making. It was, on the whole, rather weary work to begin building again from the very beginning. Well, he didn't think he minded very much ; if he was successful in the end it was worth while a thousand times. He tried to have confidence in his ultimate success ; but, as far as he could see, he made no headway. It is particularly difficult for an energetic, passionate, yet reserved nature to play a waiting game. Still he could go on building up the conviction, like a wall around her, that he was necessary to her in some ways. He could determine, and keep his determination, that, whatever happened, she should never find him there too often.

He was so cautious and played his game so well that a queer thing happened of which he was wholly ignorant. Brenda came to the conclusion that he and Madeleine had some understanding between them which precluded getting engaged. She had heard of such things ; she had been about so little that it was not surprising if she had not met them at first hand. But she had read a great deal about really deep, satisfactory, platonic friendships in the present day. Nothing could be clearer than this : Basil was not making love to Madeleine, though he had every opportunity. Yet nothing

could be clearer than that they liked each other's society, and sought it freely. Brenda's own philosophy and experience of life could not solve the problem, so she believed in books. She was slipping, though she did not quite know it, below the ground that she had stood on the day that they left Lausanne.

Nobody saw the subtle change in Brenda, except Mrs. Musgrave and Madeleine Leigh herself. A thought so terrible and distressing as that Basil could be in love with herself had never entered the latter's mind. She knew that in a sense she would miss his homage, but she could not expect to keep him always by her sofa. He had done a good deal for her at the time that she needed it most, now he was going to make Brenda happy. Thus the invalid, lying quietly on her sofa, thought about the matter, and resolved that it was splendid. Helen was not very observant, and refused firmly to believe that Brenda loved her cousin. Mrs. Musgrave was the one who watched and understood most, and yet knew not how to help her children. She came accidentally on a volume of Coventry Patmore's prose that she had given to Brenda for Christmas. It opened at a page at which one passage, and that a very beautiful one, was deeply marked. It describes the journey of those who have given up their heart's desire freely and gone into a far country. These are led back by another way into the land of their own longings when they least expect it. The date was written against the

passage in Brenda's handwriting ; it was Thursday, January 17. That was the day on which some very anxious news about the progress of the war had reached them. Yet Mrs. Musgrave remembered that Brenda had gone about throughout the day looking as though she had heard good tidings.

About this time Madeleine had a long, warm-hearted, kindly letter from Mrs. Carnmoney. She expressed her sympathy with Madeleine's troubles and begged her to come and stay with them in London. As for Areverga, she mentioned that John had arranged to take on the place by the year, until something could be settled by the lawyers. "How extraordinary it is to think that that terrible man was here lunching with us the same day that you were! John said that he always knew that he hated his kinsman, by the way he spoke of him that day. So like old John! He wanted to get them to meet, in hopes that if they got to know each other they really might forget their quarrel and become friends. Isn't it a good thing he didn't? He might have murdered him under this very roof, and we never could have lived here afterwards. It really will be a satisfactory end to all these troubles if we are able to buy this house." After much love and family news Mrs. Carnmoney signed herself: "Your devoted Maimie."

"P.S.—Do you know the Peabodys at Biarritz? They are such nice people, and so fond of golf. I wasn't at all surprised to hear that you had been

ill, but the fresh air and exercise will do you good; you ought to be out-of-doors as much as possible."

Madeleine told the others about the letter, and asked if any of them felt inclined for golf.

"Have you ever tried it, Brenda? I think you'd like it. There are such lovely walks everywhere in connection with the golf-links."

It interested Madeleine to try to make schemes for Brenda while she herself was laid aside.

"I have been waiting for Basil to offer to teach me," she answered, pouting and looking rather pretty.

"I beg your pardon, Brenda, I had forgotten you wanted to learn. I remember we did say something about it in the spring."

Basil said nothing more about the subject, but rather avoided it for the rest of the day. In the evening he thought better of it, got up and fetched a local guide, turned up the regulations as to joining the golf-club, and invited her to come to-morrow.

"You and I might go and call on the Peabodys," said Helen, after a moment, addressing Mrs. Musgrave; "it is dull for Brenda with no young people."

Brenda was very happy, happier than it is wise to be, as she tramped about the golf-links receiving lessons. Her cousin was giving his whole attention to the work he had in hand, and gave her careful teaching. Having once begun, he found that he rather enjoyed the exercise for

mind and body ; he was cheerful, and chaffed her with appalling seriousness.

"You must never mind showing your legs, Brenda, in golf ; be sure you keep them as wide apart as this." He wasn't a particularly tall man, but he was considerably taller than his little cousin.

She responded readily, showing more wit and power of seeing a joke than she had ever shown before ; and showing herself an apt pupil because she was enjoying herself.

After a few days he pronounced her good enough to join in a foursome with other people.

"Nothing gets you on like a foursome. There are those people Mrs. Imes called on." Certainly life was beginning to look brighter and more normal for the party in the little house upon the cliffs. There was no society in the sense of gaieties that winter, by reason of the Boer War. But her friend's letter had made Madeleine realise that they were all living like hermits on her account.

Of all the little party gathered together at Biarritz I think that Janet Musgrave, Basil's mother, had the most leisure to think and to observe. It turned out that the Peabodys were expecting a son from the war, invalided with enteric. It happened that he came from James Leigh's regiment, and, of course, he came early to call upon the sisters. He came in and saluted them, a pleasant-looking man about five-and-twenty with exceedingly crisp hair. He carried

a parcel in his hand, and having spoken to Mrs. Imes turned to Madeleine and bowed, refusing to lay it down, but holding it out solemnly and waiting for her to take it in her hands. "It isn't heavy, and it doesn't bite or scratch. I have sworn a solemn oath, Miss Leigh, never to part with it until I give it into your hands. It is the siege monkey. Three of us vowed to keep it alive whatever happened, your brother being one, and we kept our oath, until it was discovered taking the men's rations. Then we had a court-martial, and condemned it to be killed without injury to the skin. We tossed up for the skin, and your brother won, and came to tell me about it, for I happened to be in hospital; the other fellow was engaged and wanted to send it to his young woman. Leigh wouldn't allow that at any price. I wish I could remember all the messages that he sent you with it, but he was always inventing fresh ones."

The story was told with so much frankness and good-humour that it made a very favourable impression. He sat chatting for half an hour with Helen; he had plenty to say for himself, and he said it pleasantly.

"I don't know whether you care about drives," he said, turning to Madeleine again, "but Jim told me that you were fond of horses. I've got a dog-cart. I had to have something to play with, there's so little that I can do."

Madeleine gave an indefinite acceptance; she did not care about doing it, though his freshness

attracted her, and driving in a dog-cart reminded her of old days.

Janet Musgrave had been present at the interview, and she happened to refer to it that night. Mrs. Musgrave often sat with her and talked and read till she was inclined to sleep. They chatted pleasantly, Madeleine declaring that it did her good to see a stranger sometimes; she had played the hermit quite long enough.

"There is no need to begin until you feel inclined."

The younger woman shivered, though the night was warm.

"Our military friend will want to come and see you again," said Mrs. Musgrave, laughing. "I never saw any one so *épris*, at first sight too." But she made a mistake this time; she surprised a look of such horror and misery that she changed the subject.

Mrs. Musgrave pondered the matter over deeply that night and many nights and found no solution. What was Madeleine's story? Could Dugald's boyish flirtation fill her with such terror even at the thought of love, remembering the tragedy with which it closed?

Mrs. Musgrave felt instinctively that Madeleine's mind and heart moved on too large lines for the explanation to be adequate.

"He prayeth best who leaves unguessed the secret of another's breast." That was the motto of all the little party who lived together at Biarritz, loving, knowing each other, each

standing on hidden depths of their own experience.

A day or two later the news reached them, with seeming suddenness, that Colonel Leigh was wounded. The look of one who is bearing a burden that involves suffering returned to Madeleine's eyes. Was it anxiety for her father? Or was young Peabody's deferential homage to be held responsible? These were the questions Janet Musgrave asked herself continually, finding no reply.

CHAPTER XVII

JANET MUSGRAVE was a diligent woman ; she was always occupied with some useful piece of work, and her mind worked as rapidly as her hands. While she was busy with needlework or letters, or in doing little odd jobs about the house, she thought about Madeleine, and the thought worried her. When the girl was alone, or not conscious of being wanted, the haunted look of one who bears burdens too heavy for speech filled the dark grey eyes. There were two Madeleines : the one whom they saw, attentive, keeping in touch with all that happened, and the other who lived a life apart.

Mrs. Musgrave thought over the problem consciously and semi-consciously, sleeping and waking, and she met with her reward at last. She was doing some cooking, Devonshire dainties for Helen, when the idea came on her like a flash. She remembered suddenly this change had begun that day when Madeleine had gone for a walk alone on the beach ; Basil had met her and they had returned together. It was the day the news had reached them that Colonel Leigh was wounded. Could Basil have proposed ? Could

he have been mad enough? Most men in love were subject to fits of madness. But, no, it was not that; when they had returned, on terms of friendliness, Basil had chatted as they walked. Neither was it the news about Madeleine's father: that was an open sorrow and a sorrow shared. The girl was bearing a load of which she could not speak.

Now all Mrs. Musgrave's training and instincts were against prying into other people's secrets. But Janet had a conscience, and her conscience was fighting, as it will occasionally, against law and custom. Conscience told her that Madeleine might be facing dangers too tragic for her to face alone. Such terrible things had happened already, none could foresee or could tell what other strange honours Fate might hold in store. In her wildest dreams Madeleine had never thought to bear such great suffering for Alan McQuoid's sake.

One thing was certain, the girl was rapidly recovering the control of all her splendid powers. She was stronger physically, she took long walks every afternoon, and she nearly always went alone. Neither Helen nor Basil quite approved of this, but Mrs. Musgrave told them that Madeleine was strong enough to walk, but not to walk and talk as well. This quiet diplomacy satisfied Helen completely, and she gave herself up to her letters and needlework. She was expecting another child in May, and lived somewhat withdrawn amid her fears and hopes. Madeleine shared these. Madeleine was very much in touch

with Helen, but kept her own secrets. It was a strange paradox: because she really loved and understood her sister she held her own counsel.

Several days had passed before Mrs. Musgrave made up her mind that she must follow Madeleine and help her to bear the burden, whatever that might be. She was led to the decision by an unexpected event which happened one afternoon. It was just a week after the walk to Toby-rock. She had seen Madeleine and Helen go out with Donnet, and believed that they were out still, when a sudden thunder-storm broke over the town. It came driving against the house, strong and sharp and furious. Madeleine's window was on the windward side, and it was her habit to leave her windows open. Mrs. Musgrave thought of all the girl's pretty things lying out on the dressing-table. She hurried to the door, knocked, but did not stay to wait for a reply, opened it, and went inside. Madeleine was sitting there, sitting in the window-seat, the rain driving furiously against her cheek and hair. Her eyes were open, but "their sense was shut"; she did not see her friend, but spoke low and brokenly.

"If I loved him one jot or tittle less I believe I should go with him. God forgive me!" And Mrs. Musgrave saw the look of direct, unmitigated agony unveiled at last. After that there was no room for doubt. Some tragedy was happening just round the corner, and she must hesitate no longer, but go forward and bear her share. She must be ready to go back, if necessary, in ignor-

ance, without telling Madeleine what she had seen or known. Something must have happened. Madeleine had parted from her sister and maid, and met some one. Whom?

Madeleine started off for her walk early the next afternoon, and walked very swiftly. Janet Musgrave followed her; it needed some effort to keep in sight unnoticed, but her will was set. A woman of sixty, accustomed to activity all her life, she could still do things when the day demanded it.

They were nearly out of the town when Madeleine Leigh stood still, glanced round, and then turned sharply and disappeared mysteriously into a little shop. She came out again; the flat string bag was now bulky with packages of different shapes. Janet came up to the *boutique*; it was a *boulangerie*, or rather a shop for provisions of different kinds. Madeleine by this time was out of sight. Mrs. Musgrave hesitated, but only for a moment; she turned towards the cliff. Madeleine was ahead, speeding across the beach with a sure and rapid tread when Mrs. Musgrave reached the shore.

Janet waited a moment. In front of her was the beach, stretching away emptily towards the group of rocks which rounded off the bay as though the world had come to an end. That was the object of their walk. Mrs. Musgrave recognised instinctively that that was the object of their walk. And Janet waited, watching with concentrated eagerness till Madeleine turned the rocks. Then

she rose and followed her. The tide was coming in; things of that sort hardly counted at such a time as this. She had not come there to be useless, she had come there to help this greatly-daring woman in her hour of need. By hook or by crook, even at the risk of slipping into these deep sea-pools she must get round those rocks. Mrs. Musgrave did not ask herself whom it was Madeleine visited daily behind the rocky barrier. It took her more than half an hour, make what speed she would. She slipped so often, and the distance was nearly a mile. At last she heard the sound of voices, a man's voice speaking brokenly, but almost without interruption from any one else. The roar of the wind, the noise of the waves dashing up against the beach concealed the words at first. Then she began to catch them slowly: broken sentences, full of a pith and a passion, an odd sincerity that made their meaning plain. She waited, sheltering behind a friendly boulder, unseen, yet a witness of all that might befall.

It was a weird, desolate scene; the shape of the cliffs was stern, the sand and rocks alike were grey and desolate. The caves were large and dark, but they added rather to the terror than to the overwhelming desolation. What might be hidden within those gloomy depths?

Madeleine was standing in front of the caves; dressed in a quiet black coat and skirt such as Helen loved to see her in. A man was standing in front of Madeleine. Mrs. Musgrave had never seen him before, but knew instinctively who he

was as he stood there, leaning against the rock, looking down upon the ground, and told his whole story. A low, flat basket lay on a rock beside him, emptied of half its contents.

Madeleine had taken off her gloves, her hands were stretched out a little towards him, though she did not move. Here was the ruin of a great man. Mrs. Musgrave had heard and read of his great height, and bright colouring, and his splendid bearing. Now his hair was streaked with grey; he looked insignificant, broken, humbled in that grand and desolate scene. His face was seamed with the lines that only age or some great devouring passion has power to write. Had Madeleine indeed loved him? Janet knew how little power of loving could still be left her now. Even as she thought this The McQuoid laid bare some touch of his former stateliness in look and word and gesture. Had Madeleine loved, as so many women love, the thing the man might be, not the thing he was?

Alan was speaking, telling his whole story, as a dying man will tell it, without fear or shame. He stopped. She could not hear well. Madeleine was speaking, her voice hardly carried against the wind and waves. Then, suddenly, for the next quarter of an hour, there was a lull in the wind, she could hear everything distinctly. Alan was speaking again; it was the voice of a man whose will has been broken and utterly humbled. There was no renewal in it, no spring of hope, he was simply treading the way of hard

acknowledgment. He did not see that any hope, or gain, or salvation, could come to himself from what he was doing, but he would go on with it until the end. Janet was shocked and humbled; Madeleine might be conscious of a certain greatness in this matter, the greatness of utter despair, but such heights of acknowledgment and generosity as these were beyond Janet's philosophy.

"It was a sordid story. I could not endure the thought that you or Colonel Leigh should know it. . . . I was not ashamed of the shooting-affair; the girl herself swore before the courts at Kimberley the other had fired first. I was right in killing him; every man with the heart of a man within him would have done as I did at that moment. The brute was flogging her to death. I was right in that, and right in putting her on my horse, and taking her back to the town at once. But it was the diamonds. It was just when I thought I had resisted temptation that the great temptation came. It came so suddenly; she pulled a small canvas bag out of her bosom, and told me to keep it, saying that they neither belonged to her, nor Slogger Jim, nor to any one else. I felt as though I had earned them as my reward, because of the trials I had passed through that night. When the doctor questioned me, I give you my word I meant to tell him about them, but somehow I didn't. I heard another man's voice saying with my lips: 'Not diamonds, it's a bag of sights for my rifle.' It was such a

fiendishly ingenious reason such as only I, Alan McQuoid, would think of."

Madeleine sat down upon a rock; the very detail with which Alan told his story made her task the harder. This was the fifth day that she had stood there, enduring things unutterable, and her strength was failing. Janet, who saw Alan McQuoid then, saw him when the wild passions of which Madeleine had borne the first brunt were broken down and spent. He had not scrupled at first to pour out the wild tumult of his love for her, knowing as he did that she also loved him. In that atmosphere of despair, revolt, and longing, and love or lust unsatisfied Madeleine had stood holding her ground by a miracle, the one miracle by which Christianity has always lived. Yet she had been fighting a great and terrible battle, all the past forgotten in the one passionate desire to save this man's soul—passionate, though, the desire was hardly conscious. She only knew that she had to go on praying, and speaking, and standing where she stood and leave the rest to God.

Madeleine began to speak. Mrs. Musgrave would rather watch those dear lips moving than hear the words they said. But yet her interest was enthralling; all that was puzzling in this strange and terrible story was made plain at last. Then, once again, the terrible deep despair of the man's voice carried his words towards her.

"I will tell you everything. If ever Nemesis descended quickly on any criminal that man

stands before you. I saw him suddenly in the road, and then, then the horrible desire for my revenge descended; I hated his very life. I followed, followed, followed. The moment had come when the great issues of life and death must be tried between us. I followed into the billiard-room, and then, as I stood outside in the garden, he went into the dark-room, and there in front of me lay the silver stiletto. It was the means to do ill deeds. It is true that I hesitated for a moment when I saw how small he was beside me; but only for a moment. When he stooped to pick up the brooch I made some slight noise, he turned and saw me, and at once snatched up the stiletto to defend himself. That gave me my excuse; he was armed and I was not, our physical inequality was made up at last. I rushed upon him and overwhelmed him. I will tell you everything. I half-dragged and half-carried him to the end of that dark cellar, but his grip did not relax, he would not let me go. Every man who is a man dies fighting against death and never surrenders; the ground falls beneath him. It was thus with Dugald; at the last he showed his mastery over the man who had killed him, and worked full revenge. You must know this as well as the rest: the man who loved you far better than I did showed his manliness to the last. He would not let me go, until he had forced my eyes to meet him, and then force was needless. Have you heard of officers, sorely wounded in battle, 'composing their faces that they might die

like gentlemen?' Dugald reminded me of that. I saw him husbanding his strength as he spoke, that he might say it well. 'Alan, you are my heir; if you had come to see me, as I asked, I would have shared the heritage. The lawyers, when you go to claim your property, will show you the deeds that I had had drawn up.' After that he escaped, but he held me with his eye as his prisoner until his eye glazed. He turned away with a sigh, like one content and entering with full knowledge into the land of freedom.

"That was all, but it was enough. I had that to digest as best I might in the hours that followed. I crept away from him on hands and knees, hurriedly, in mortal terror, until at last I struggled out into the light. I stumbled across the billiard-room, but as I stopped for a moment outside the window I saw you approaching. The sight of you arrested me. I should have rushed off to save myself if I could. If you found the body I knew that all men would believe that you had murdered him. If you came out without seeing it, then it would probably lie hidden for days, none would connect you with this business. So I waited—waited for hours, lying hid against the garden wall. Then I saw you come out; I knew by the way you walked, by every look and gesture, that you had not found that horror lying hid at the end of the passage. I rushed off into the darkness—there was enough moonlight to see the broken wall. I made for it instinctively, and, as you know, scrambled over

it and dropped the fatal seal. I think the gods were mocking me. If they had given me the chance of giving myself up to save you, then I believe I should have taken it. My whole soul had been penetrated by the quiet contempt with which Dugald turned away. My God, what would I not give now to be doing penal servitude, having set you free!

“Madeleine, until we know the meaning of the word ‘irrevocable’ we have not tasted judgment. My hair turned grey that night. It was partly for this reason—the police were looking for a young man, full of unusual physical and mental vigour, I was the reverse of that—I escaped detection. I had a long dark overcoat, I made my way to the station, as the evidence proved, and caught the midnight train.

“I escaped into the mountains, and I, the heir of the McQuoids, begged for shelter and told a wheedling tale. The Pastor took me into his house for pity. I stayed with him some days; and then, one evening, the news reached me of your arrest. That night he thought I was mad. I fought with it, fought with it, always fighting against my better self. If the Pastor had understood my ravings he must have guessed my secret, but no one in the village spoke a word of English. Night after night I resolved to go down and give myself up and save you. When the morning came *I could not do it*. But at least I waited; the news of your conviction would have pierced me through with shame and given

me strength at last. If you had been convicted, I declare it solemnly, I should have gone down and should have declared the truth."

Then Janet understood that during those five or six weeks Madeleine Leigh's prison-house, cramped and horrible though it had seemed, had been open space and liberty compared with Alan McQuoid's freedom.

"There is one thing more—I would to God that I could keep back this thing, that you might never know—it was I who killed your father. I killed him deliberately, and am guilty, far more guilty, in his case than in the other. I knew that I was sending him to his death when I talked to him in the Glen that day we fished together. I knew everything that must happen when you rustled past me in the hall of the hotel that night. And I stood there sticking stamps on to an envelope. I never see a stamp without the scene returning. If Colonel Leigh had come to know my history he would have kept you from me for ever. That is all, at last. Would that I had been man enough to keep it back from you and bear my load in silence."

Hush! In the midst of tempest there sometimes falls a sudden tremulous hush, when the heavens have been riven, and the earth lies still, waiting silently.

Madeleine was silent, trying to believe that a man would be saved whom God had deigned to purify with such fires as this. That two hours in the garden—the mere thought and horror of it

filled Madeleine with new emotion and terror and killed all thought of self and gave her strength once more.

For her love for Alan McQuoid, the love that had sustained her through this last week, was killed at last for ever. It had fallen dead within her when she heard and understood that her father was dead and Alan McQuoid had killed him.

She began speaking in low tones, with shrinking horror, which she controlled visibly, but which the murderer saw. And Janet pitied him, understanding with a strange new vision at once all his suffering and temptation, and all the horror of his defiled soul. Madeleine was speaking of the immediate future, of the care she had taken to secure his safety, pushing the past aside. Then a sudden, gusty roar sunk away suddenly into silence and Janet could hear once more.

“ Yes, it’s all settled ; you will go to-night, you may escape and begin life again. Don’t go out to the war ; you have forfeited your right to play your part in that, you must not attempt to seize it. Go to Canada or Australia. Do not write to me ; you and I must never meet and correspond again. We must be dead to each other, henceforth and for ever, but before we part I want to know the truth. Tell me more about my father. Were you lying to us then, in Scotland, when you persuaded him that it was his duty to go out ? Were you lying to me earlier, four years before, when you told me of all the things you meant to

do and dare? Why did you do that? I can understand the other, but neither he nor I had ever wronged you."

Even Mrs. Musgrave was almost sorry for him as he raised his eyes and showed his heart's despair. It is not very often, after all, that one sees a man who is broken, beaten down to the lowest depths. Not to go out to the war; that great refuge of the brave and the despairing had been denied him. For Janet knew, and knew that Madeleine knew, that he would be discovered at once, no commander would employ him.

When Alan spoke again his hoarse, broken voice had a note of determination: he paused, but did not stop.

"I can tell you more: I can tell the truth because I see and understand it as I never did before. Don't imagine that I am repentant. All the old delusions—that's the right word, delusions—will come back to me when I have left you. You know why I did the thing that I did in my madness on that night, for which you suffered instead of me. All the passions which I had been indulging all my life took possession of me. I stood still and watched. It was the same in Scotland. I had refused all my life to believe in goodness. I would not trust or hope, I trusted myself alone. I thought that he would never consent to your coming to me. I must win you while he was away. I was not lying when I talked to you and we built up our castles, for I believed those dreams myself, whether they were true or false. I never

have lied, Madeleine, consciously when I talked to you. I always believed that if you came to me I should conquer myself at last."

"You left me in the prison, I can forgive that. But my father: did you believe that he would return alive?"

The wretched man groaned.

"I knew that he would not. I knew it before heaven and hell, I knew it most assuredly. I cannot tell you why. If Colonel Leigh dies—and he is dead already—I am his murderer. I am as guilty, far more guilty, in his case than in the other. I did it deliberately. You asked me for the truth, and the truth is the one thing I have to give you. I cannot hold it back, even if I would."

Madeleine struggled. Mrs. Musgrave saw her struggle at the blow that fell with such tremendous force. She had been looking at him steadily with the quiet, passionate, impassioned longing of those whose life is given for others. But Mrs. Musgrave saw the sap of life dry up as it withers suddenly in a tree that has been blasted.

Then was the moment, if ever, for Janet Musgrave to come forward and help her friend in utter self-forgetfulness. Alan must dree his weird. Mrs. Musgrave pitied him, but at that moment she could think of none but Madeleine. She came forward at once. There was nothing great enough to avail them then save all-forgetting love.

"Madeleine, lean on me. I have heard everything. Come home with me at once, your work is accomplished here. I have much to tell you,

much that will greatly help and comfort you later when you are able to bear it."

Madeleine turned and came to her. They had not seen her till that moment, but there was no room for astonishment on that lonely beach—anything might happen. Madeleine felt herself to be at the mercy of all the elements and all the passions. They might do with her as they listed, but here was some one—a human heart that loved her. Madeleine turned as she was bidden. Bending, broken, she stooped over the elder woman, murmuring words of thankfulness that she had come at last. Janet drew her down on to a low rock beside her, and they sat there for a time, giving each other strength. Madeleine's head was bent low, her face buried in her hands. And all the while the waves were creeping nearer, nearer, feigning impotence as they dashed against the rocks. It hardly mattered that they were shut in by the tide and obliged to wait, since they could wait together. It is difficult to over-estimate the depth and passion of the love between these two in that tremendous hour. Even the murderer saw it and sat down awed and hushed, neither speaking nor intruding himself upon them.

If Mrs. Musgrave had not happened to drop a letter it is quite possible that Basil would never have found them. Of course he was anxious, and equally, of course, Mrs. Imes was anxious when they had not returned by five. It was natural to go to the beach at once; had he not seen a letter of his mother's blowing towards him he might

not have persevered nor have arrived in time. It was clear that his mother had been there. He looked all round until his gaze was met by the rocks that guarded the caves. Mrs. Musgrave had said, as everybody did say, that some day or other she must manage to get as far as the caves. It was much too far for her, but Madeleine was adventurous, and Basil was uneasy as he hastened across the beach. The tide had begun to turn, but Musgrave, who knew that the ground shelved suddenly, preferred to climb over the rocks. Then he saw them sitting, and a man whom he had never seen before, but whom he recognised, was in the cave's mouth. "Alan, Alan!" The cry that he had heard from Madeleine at the trial rang in his ears once more.

"Hullo, mother. Is that you, Miss Leigh? You two have managed to get shut in by the tide."

Clambering along the cliffs, so as to get a better jumping-place, he dropped lightly on to the ground beside them.

"I suppose you know who I am, sir?" said the outlaw furiously; "you can go and send the police, and have me arrested if you choose."

But Basil did not answer. His first feeling was that in his mother's presence and Miss Leigh's he dared not trust himself to speak or look at the man at all. He stood and shared their watch, keeping guard over the women in silence; while nearly half an hour slipped by they sat outside in the daylight. They heard the murderer

pacing up and down in the gloom and darkness ; twice he came to the door of the cave, entreating them to tell him if they saw the ship coming across the bar.

"It has been delayed," said Basil briefly, "if you mean the *Nancy-Jane*, sailing from London to Vigo ; she cannot be here till late."

"Then let me go with you ; give me up to the police, but do not leave me here alone at night. I am like a madman, I shall do away with myself if I am left alone. Madeleine, believe me." As he spoke he realised that his power with that woman was gone for ever. Her heart had not hardened, but all power of response, of giving and suffering, had left it, and only the shell remained.

Alan looked at her, sitting on the rock, and had a vision of her greatness and humility. Master of himself for the next few moments, he folded his arms and watched them go with dignity. Musgrave looked at him, he had seldom seen the two selves that are in all men change their ownership so rapidly.

"Stay here," said Musgrave briefly ; "in less than an hour I will come back and watch with you till the steamer calls."

And so Musgrave followed Madeline across the beach, and Alan watched them until they had turned the rocks.

It was because he saw that the danger was very real that Basil Musgrave resolved to stay and face it. He knew something about insanity ; he knew a man like Alan might do something

desperate if he were left alone. He went back with the women, Madeleine leaning upon his arm the greater part of the way, until he reached the town. Then as he turned and walked slowly towards the caves he asked himself over and over again what would it matter if such a man committed suicide? And he gave himself the answer: so long as his own manliness remained to him it was his to hinder it. He that doth not actively concern himself with regard to the welfare of his brother is written down a murderer.

During the next few hours Musgrave saw and understood the horror in which Alan McQuoid had lived. The scene had changed when he returned; the sky and sea were turned to blackness, but the white cliffs stood out against the blackness, looking weird and ominous. He heard something moving within; it was more like the movements of a restless animal scrabbling against the rocks, beating itself furiously, tearing up the sand. It was an odd contrast, the dignified being, who had stood in silence watching Madeleine go, master of the shattered remnants of his manhood.

Then he changed once more. Musgrave heard him saying the Latin paternoster over and over again. He had been brought up in the Roman Church, and the instincts of childhood return in moments of great weakness and great emotion. His fire and imagination testified to his spiritual capacity; but what availed it while one thing was lacking? What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, including, like Balaam, the

world of a spiritual experience, and lose or forfeit his own self?

It could not last; the sevenfold spirits that lie in wait for empty houses fought their fight once more. The starvation fever returned; Musgrave forced him to lie down, but could not stop his talking, and he talked incessantly.

At one time he fancied that he was a boy again, and that his mother was urging him to murder Dugald. Then he believed that Musgrave was his father, and that they were standing among the heather at Areverga, beside the grim, black turnstile, looking down upon the castle. Once he took out his clasp-knife as though he thought it were a pistol, raised his hand and fired. Musgrave had heard the story of the diamonds, and of his shooting Slogger Jim, for it was common property. Since his crime had been discovered the daily press had been full of such stories, true and false alike.

There was one delusion which continually returned and bore witness to nothing of which Basil knew. The sick man fancied himself standing on the platform at Berne awaiting the train to London. When he saw the train come in he would spring up, shouting Calais, Dover, London, and then fall back, unable to board it.

The delusion of the train was always followed by another delusion still more horrible: Alan fancied himself back in the dark-room, constrained to keep his watch by the man whom he had murdered. Madeleine was in sight, surrounded by

a circle of red light, as his fancy limned her. He would point at her and gaze at her, and then he must needs turn and talk to the man beside him, his victim Dugald. He believed that he was condemned to watch in that dark-room, for many centuries perhaps, through all eternity. In the small hours of the morning he fell asleep at last, and then Musgrave heard the signal and was obliged to wake him. With passions purified by pity and by terror, Musgrave helped him down to the boat, but Alan did not know him. He talked about Madeleine, the thought of her presence on the beach possessed him and gave him a sense of peace.

There was still no hint of daylight when Musgrave let himself with a latch-key into the house where they all lived together. A candle was put ready for him, and a cablegram had been laid by it that he might read and know. Madeleine had learnt that Colonel Leigh was dead.

During the week that Colonel Leigh died came the news of Spion Kop ; it was the worst week of the war. It seemed that this little family had gone down with their country into the valley of the shadow of death and darkness, suffering and humiliation, "where the very light is as darkness."

CHAPTER XVIII

BASIL MUSGRAVE was not by any means a philosopher, but some of his thoughts were tinged with metaphysics. He knew that Madeleine had been actually facing one of the deepest problems of all time—the mystery of forgiveness. He had always believed in forgiveness, he believed in it tenfold more because this woman had proved its efficacy. The old Christian laws, and commonplaces had kept her heart from bitterness and from despair and anger, and, above all, from that thirst for revenge which is in itself a living death. Even when she had suffered most at the thought of what Alan had done, she had no room for bitterness. And Alan had been condemned, in this life at least, because he could neither forgive nor believe in forgiveness. Basil and Madeleine talked about the man together sometimes and wondered how he fared.

It was in January that Madeleine parted with Alan McQuoid on the beach at Lisonne: it was in March that the sisters decided to return to England and take a flat in London. Many reasons led to it, the obvious one being that Willy Imes

was returning, invalided with enteric. Of course they must go where they could get the best doctors, nurses, and comforts for invalids. It is the home of the homeless, even for those who do not live there, the heart of the empire, the concealer of secrets, the great testing-house of mankind. Madeleine, who dreaded meeting people who would know her, since her name had been placarded on every hoarding, knew that she could lose and find herself in Town. So they returned in time to see Queen Victoria driving in and out among the shouting crowds. London was mad, mad with khaki, and with a strange consciousness of its peril and its greatness. And yet this war in the Transvaal was only the fore-taste, the preliminary training-ground for the war that was to come.

It was then that Madeleine's thoughts turned once more and quite definitely in the direction of working in a hospital. It was in the air, and Madeleine was longing to take hold of her life and make it real once more. The Colonel's death would have meant a breaking-off for her, in any case, and a new beginning. She had dreams of a career, but the only career that appealed to her just now was nursing at the front.

But Madeleine could not go while the war lasted, and the war dragged on for another two years. After three months Willy went out again. When peace was declared Helen and Madeleine were living quietly in their flat, and Helen had

four children; the youngest, a girl, had been born in May, and was only six weeks old. Just about this time Madeleine made known that her mind was running on nursing in a hospital. After that, though she did not say so, her thoughts were turning towards some work for women. Justice lies in forgiveness; if women knew how to play their part differently they would have less of which to complain.

Willy objected, but his sister-in-law managed to show him that it was much the best thing that she could do. "You will be taking Helen away," she said, "and Jim must stick to his profession for several years. I want a profession too; the world has grown dreadfully serious, Willy, of late, and I find I cannot go on playing." Madeleine was right, the new century was ushered in amid gloom and seriousness. We have had ages of faith and ages of doubt and ages of adventure, which is faith in action. Now, perhaps, we are in for a century of seeing things as they really are.

Willy gave in and they all drove over to see the hospital and interview the Matron. It was a country hospital. Helen was convinced that Madeleine could never stand the life in London. Just before they left the Matron asked whether Miss Leigh had had any experience in surgical work. She spoke kindly.

"You look strong," she said, "but some very strong people find their nerves try them."

Madeleine was puzzled, surely the Matron had

not taken her for a nervous, excitable girl. "Things will be different from anything you expect," she added significantly, and then said no more.

Madeleine certainly found herself in a world of wholly new experiences when she went into a hospital. She had read in old days "of crowding good on good until not a chink is left between." But she never believed that it was possible to do it to the tune to which they did it in the hospital. Called before six, she was surprised to find herself fully dressed and in the ward within a quarter of an hour. By eight o'clock, when the nurses had had their breakfast, a good morning's work had already been accomplished. She had read in Voltaire a dictum which he is said to have proved by his own genius: "There is time for everything, if one chooses to use it." There seemed to be time for everything in a hospital, time for everything in connection with the patients, but for nothing in connection with her own affairs. She could not imagine how she was to find time to write a letter or to mend a stocking. After two days, when she went for her first two hours of liberty, she drew a long breath; she leant out of the window of her room to do it. She had been there two days, but she seemed to have been toiling under the weight of the hospital for weeks and weeks. She ought to have gone out, and she slipped off her uniform, intending to get into a coat and skirt. Yielding to overmastering fatigue, she threw herself on her bed and slept for an hour and a half; she had been suffering from

insomnia for the last six months. But the Matron scolded her like a child next morning for misusing the time allotted to air and exercise.

Madeleine picked up the burden which she had chosen to bind about her shoulders, and went on with it again. She did not get ill, but the drudgery of her work told on her more as the weeks advanced. It was a hard physical struggle she had to fight, though a struggle which might end in stronger nerves and muscles. Nearly all women who work for their living pass through some such struggle, and do emerge the stronger for it. But there is a point where the struggle becomes desperate, they must make up their minds to die rather than give in.

Madeleine's experience was much the same as theirs. She knew what they knew: sheer physical fatigue can take the form of torture if there is no relief. It is not true, and probably never was true, that nurses and probationers are expected to scrub the wards out. But the long, back-aching hours upon her feet were the longer for the strain of continuous attention. Night after night for nearly a month her feet were sore and swollen through constant standing. Her work ill-used her, but she clung to it like grim death, loving it, hating it, resolved to master it at any cost. In truth, it was not that particular kind of work that she loved, or hated, but the chance to find herself. If it had been only the work that tried her she always believed that she would have emerged the victor.

But it was not the work alone ; the Matron had spoken from experience when she alluded to operations.

Nurse Leigh had so much manner and outward self-control that she had been called into the theatre earlier than most probationers. There she had disgraced herself, in her own eyes, if not in other people's, by fainting in the room itself. It mattered less than she supposed, for nothing had really been left to depend on a new probationer. But no one told her that. She had been given things to do and she had proved herself incapable of doing them. The Matron was puzzled, for after her first guess she had given her credit for strength above the average. There had been a subconscious connection between that white operating-table and Dugald stretched on the billiard-table at Lausanne. The powers that are at work in the moulding and fashioning of the least of us are more than the human mind can follow.

The Matron, however, knew something about the moulding and fashioning of human instruments for her special purpose. The sister-in-charge reported that she considered Miss Leigh would never be much use as a surgical nurse.

"She might be of some use in a medical ward, Matron, but I should put her down as quite hopeless in the surgical. I hear that she wants to go out to South Africa. I should say the sooner she is undeceived the better."

The Matron, however, postponed her decision

for probationers of that type were not easy to obtain. But the Matron, wise and forbearing though she was, could not alter the inevitable, and the Sister triumphed. They gave Madeleine another chance, and since she again had shown herself incapable, they were obliged to tell her they could not recommend her to continue. It was not unjust, but Madeleine felt that the justice meted out to her was hard to bear. The Higher Powers had set up a mark for her to aim at, perhaps to try her mettle, possibly to see if she were ready to dare and do as well as to endure. This being accomplished they pushed her gently out of the way and humbled her soul once more.

She poured out a good deal of her grief to Willy, who came down to see her that very day. He listened to everything, and then he told her that what she wanted was a change of air.

"I've brought old Basil Musgrave with me," he added, "in his motor. Did you know he was in England again? He's not on leave, but there's a Commission on his province, and he was sent for to give evidence. Yes, it's rather a compliment, of course, asking him; he's very much gratified. Well, will you let him take us both for a spin? He has nothing to do, so we may as well tell him that he has got to stay and take us both out driving."

"Willy, how splendid! that's just what I want, and it is my afternoon off too. Why didn't you bring Mr. Musgrave in?"

"I thought you called him Basil! I didn't bring him in because he wouldn't come in; he's a retiring sort of beggar. Hurry up and get your things, or he may get tired of waiting."

"I wonder if this isn't old Basil's opportunity," thought Willy to himself, taking the seat behind. Basil, however, attempted to do nothing but make himself interesting on general topics.

Presently he said: "My mother was going to write and ask you to come and stay with us, when you are free."

"How very kind of her to think of it!" Madeleine never said a formal thing formally, she always spoke as though she meant it. This time she did mean it; the mere thought of a Devonshire lane is stimulating when one is overworked.

Then they talked about the difficulty experienced by so many people in finding a niche in life. "Nursing seems to be all the fashion. Did you know that Brenda had also joined a hospital?" Madeleine had not known it; she said she was interested, that she knew it was very much "the fashion" at the moment. "It is rather annoying to find that you are simply following the fashion instead of a great career." Basil laughed and said he had no idea that he was having the honour of driving a New Woman.

But the schooling that Madeleine was to derive from this incident of the hospital nursing was not yet complete. It so happened that owing to some change in the Imes's plans which made it difficult for her to leave them, her visit

to Devonshire was postponed for several weeks. Willy and Helen wanted to go off on a honeymoon together and leave the children in her charge. Thus it came about that when Madeleine went to Devonshire Brenda had passed through nearly three months of her training. She had not gone there with quite the same exalted motives as Madeleine, but she made a far better nurse.

Brenda was now twenty-one, and had begun to take stock of her position and face the future. She was resolved to earn her own living, and nursing was the only career of which she knew, definitely, except teaching, and she did not know enough to be a governess. Basil, who always expected to be treated as her brother and father and uncle rolled into one, was the only person inclined to raise objections. His mother prevented him speaking so decidedly that he was astonished; her decision of character seldom showed in opposition to her son. "You have been very good to her in the past, it would be wrong and cruel to make that a reason for interfering now. No, Basil, the old-fashioned idea is wrong: women are right to wish to earn their living. An exceptionally beautiful woman such as Madeleine may be different, but Brenda is not exceptional."

"Well, I don't understand; you brought me up to think it was a man's duty to provide for his womankind." Basil banged his hat on his head and went out, vexed and surprised at his own defeat. Accustomed to responsibility, he had

carefully thought out Brenda's needs when he made up his mind to marry. He wanted to be just, but he did not really mind finding himself a negligible factor in her life. He came back in the evening, and asked Brenda, very sweetly, if she wanted any money for her new start. He was rather crude; it had not occurred to him that there could be any reason why he should not do so.

Then was Brenda's great moment. She had chosen nursing because she could start without sacrificing her independence, because it needed only personal capital. But she must not say that, she must keep her pride without wounding Basil, or snapping links asunder. So she played with him, taking hold of herself with both hands, and putting herself down into a corner. She suggested quietly that she wanted a motor-car to take her for drives when she was off duty.

"I would run backwards and forwards to see you, Basil, if I had one. Think what an attraction that would be!" Then she added, "But you have given me everything; that lovely watch and chain on my last birthday."

He looked at her affectionately; he was not dense, though he was crude. He saw as she chatted that his mother was right, and that Brenda really wanted to be independent. But how well it suited her! His heart was Madeleine's, but Brenda was growing up pretty and attractive. His heart was Madeleine's, and it had never occurred to him that that had any significance for Brenda,

beyond a bridesmaid's frock and a bridesmaid's present. This was his ignorance. Where ignorance is bliss it is surely the height of folly to seek enlightenment. As Goethe puts it, "Animated inquiry into the cause of things does great harm." Brenda went to the hospital, Basil went to Surrey and returned with Madeleine's promise to come and stay.

Madeleine came at the end of July, when the birds have nearly stopped singing, and the air is heavy with scents as mignonette and roses. She began by mistaking a late thrush for a nightingale, which enchanted her host and put him at his ease. "You Surrey people get spoilt with nightingales. Come out into the garden and I'll soon teach you to know our thrushes."

So they went outside, and walked up and down, which they did for many evenings and many afternoons.

It was not only in Basil's fancy that his guest grew more beautiful as the days went by. Devonshire sunshine and Devonshire air does wonders for plain people ; it did more for Madeleine. Her favourite seat was just outside the drawing-room window, where she could look in and talk to them, as they sat inside. Basil tried coming out to sit beside her, but he gave it up. She seemed to like being alone. He did a lot of thinking ; he had seldom done more furious thinking than he did in those few days. The peculiar, perfectly natural, yet invulnerable attitude that he assumed was the result of that. His manner

was so perfect that after a time it was Madeleine's turn to do her share of thinking. It happened in this fashion. She was enjoying herself, and was recovering her strength and spirits after her exertions in the hospital. Not being over-reserved, it occurred to her one day to tell Mrs. Musgrave how much she was enjoying herself. "It is good of you to have me, dear Mrs. Musgrave," she exclaimed; "can't you see how much good it is doing me?"

"Oh, my dear, if you only knew." Janet was thinking of the past, neither of the present nor the future.

But Madeleine thought of the present and the possible future and went outside wondering whether she had said a foolish thing; ought she not to *know*? Was she destined always to walk through life blindfold? Was she treating Basil as she had treated Dugald? She slipped out of the garden and went down to the beach and sat by the sea alone to think out the answer. Madeleine was very fond of getting as close to the sea as she could and letting the waves roll up to her feet.

But though she enjoyed watching the waves Madeleine did not sit there long that afternoon. There were two reasons; firstly, she did not find thinking profitable, and secondly, she was interrupted. Her thoughts led her to two conclusions, which seemed incompatible, yet left her helpless. The first was that Basil was in love with her, really in love, and would marry her if she would

let him. The second was that she could not stop his attentions, for the simple reason that he did not pay her any. He was very attentive as her host and friend, and took a good deal of trouble to do well in both capacities. He made a good many plans for drives, rides on their bicycles or visits to different houses, and all this made the time pass quickly. He was with her constantly and always had a good deal to say on subjects which he knew would interest her. He did it very well, and he certainly had succeeded in making her enjoy her fortnight, and he knew it. But there was always a subtle suggestion of frankness about his courtesy which made it impossible to rebuff it. She could not call it love-making, it was something different, and the strange thing was she did not know what. And always from within there came the strong, irrefutable conviction he would marry her if he could.

She got up and shook herself; there was no use in going on thinking if her thoughts treated her like that. She heard her name called, and turned round to see that no less a person than Brenda was coming towards her. Madeleine was startled, it seemed so very odd that Brenda of all people should appear just then. She was very glad to see her; she did not quite know why, but she certainly was extremely glad to see her. There was no alloy of any kind in the open warmth and affection of Madeleine's greeting.

"Is that you? I am glad. Basil told me that

you were indispensable, and could not possibly come over ! ”

“ Well, it is rather hard on the hospital,” laughed the other, linking her arm into her friend’s as they walked in the direction of the cottage. “ But I heard that you were here, so I came for a few hours, knowing it might be my only chance of seeing you. All by yourself ? ” she added, “ or are the others hidden away among the rocks somewhere ? ”

They walked back chatting, and found Mrs. Musgrave working in the garden, and Basil mooning about. All that afternoon there was something remarkably easy, detached, and independent about Brenda. Madeleine was disappointed, she wanted to give up something big for Brenda, who had saved her from worse than death. “ She will care for him again,” she repeated to herself, “ when she knows that it is impossible for me to do so ! ”

There come times to all of us when we have to stand by and watch our ends being shaped, rough-hew them how we will. There are times in our lives when our eyes are opened, and we learn whole volumes in one short afternoon. Madeleine was learning, learning every moment of that afternoon, as she watched her friend. She felt and knew that her own will, which was set in the direction of sacrifice, was being broken. How often God had taken that will in His hand and crumpled it, as one crumples rose-leaves !

And all this while Brenda was telling them

pleasantly and humorously about her new career. She was getting on now, but it was extraordinary how difficult it had been to get things done in time. She waxed merry over the description of her difficulties! A quarter of an hour allowed for dressing in the morning! She had thought that she must either cut her hair off, or give up the practice of saying her prayers entirely. She got tired, of course, but not so much as formerly; she was a great deal tougher and more wiry than they had known. Then she thought the regular life suited her, and no time or strength was ever spent in hesitation, one always had to do the next thing at once. The Ward Sister had spoken encouragingly, and even told the Matron that she was a promising probationer.

"The funny thing was," added Brenda laughingly, "that I hated it when I went. I am only just beginning to like it."

And Madeleine sat listening with wondrous, loving eyes, saying little, but sitting close to Brenda, her hand sometimes resting on the other's knee. It was very wonderful. Brenda had taken up and done the work she herself had tried in vain to do. Mrs. Musgrave sat listening, and thought it all added to the grandeur and sweetness of Madeleine's own humility. She sat and watched in silence, she could almost see the thoughts taking shape behind those well-formed temples.

After tea the two girls, in quiet forgetfulness of

any one but themselves, wandered away and talked. They had much to talk about, their different experiences during the last six months, and the friends that they had made. They had parted as acquaintances, respecting each other, but finding it very hard to like each other's company. Now everything was changed, they met as friends. Madeleine gave thanks inwardly for this great new gift of Brenda's friendship.

There had been a moment, at Biarritz, when Basil had been on the point of asking Madeleine to be his wife. Something had stopped him, some inward, involuntary movement on her part which he had perceived and felt. A thought so sharp that it had been like a stab of pain had passed through Madeleine at the moment; that thought was "Brenda." An impulse had followed. Blindly, instinctively, she had reached forward to the conviction that Basil must never know. So she began, in her hurry, talking about Alan, telling Musgrave more about him than he had ever known before. She had done it well, the smoke of her incense had risen, effectually veiling Brenda's secret. Madeleine was glad to think of that, but there was something else that she needs must know, cost her what it would.

Time slipped away rapidly, but after a little while most of the talking fell to Brenda's share. Many of the thoughts and things with which Madeleine's heart and mind were full could not be told to Brenda. But presently Madeleine said:

"Brenda, it's very splendid your taking up

this work, but I always fancied, do you know, that you were one of the girls who would marry young."

Brenda was very rude ; she not only burst out laughing, but she refused to explain her merriment!

At last she said, " I look like it, don't I ? and as for you, you look as though you were destined to take the veil. In fact I think it very wrong of you to wear that rose-pink muslin, it's so becoming."

" I got it in a hurry." Madeleine blushed furiously and then added, " I couldn't go into a sisterhood."

Brenda knit her brows as though she were thinking out something, and then she said, looking straight in front of her, " Look here, Madeleine, it's no use saying I shall never marry, none of us can tell what may happen. I might happen to meet the right man to-morrow or ten years hence, or I might never meet him at all ; but this I am sure of, that I have found my vocation, and whether or no I marry, I shall be a happy woman. Do you know, Madeleine, I used to think that every one felt things as strongly as you or I do."

" Perhaps they do, perhaps they don't. I am sure I don't know. But do you see what the time is ?—ten minutes past six. When does your train actually leave the station ?"

" I shall have to run for it ; you may say my good-byes at the cottage," said Brenda, jumping up.

They ran both together, and of course arrived at the station about ten minutes before the train was due. "I meant to get you some flowers," said Madeleine. "The station-master here grows lavender; I'll ask him if I may pick some." And after a word to that official she plunged into the field of lavender, which grew close to the station, and began gathering armfuls. She turned up the pink muslin, showing a white lace petticoat, and knocked her hat off in her hurry as she filled her skirt. Strangers who came in the train, who saw her standing there in the great stretching field of lavender, never forgot her face.

"I'm sure I shall be forgiven, for I love her as I never knew how to love any one before," thought Brenda Musgrave, sitting alone with the lavender in a third-class railway-carriage. "And to think that it nearly drove me mad at one time to look at her, and watch her colour rising." After which Brenda, telling herself that she was talking and thinking a good deal of nonsense, settled down to read. Her book was Robert Browning. Some of the poet's deeper thoughts had grown intelligible to her lately.

CHAPTER XIX

BASIL had never found it so difficult, as he did that night, to keep up the part he had been playing. He had been all alone all day ; his lady was looking unusually lovely and withdrawn, and he longed to tell her so. He should do it, he knew that he should do it, if he found himself alone with her.

“ It is much too damp for you to go out this evening,” he said, standing in the verandah and telling a lie. He was determined that whatever happened he would not propose to her, he would not give her the opportunity of telling him that she could never love him.

Madeleine assented at once, and taking a footstool settled herself happily at Mrs. Musgrave's feet. And then when he was out she wrote a letter to her sister and slipped it amongst the letters for the post. She had made up her mind as she walked back from the station that she would not stay beyond the appointed fortnight. That was the only thing that she could do, since, according to her view of the situation, Basil was master of it, and meant to remain so. So she wrote a chatty letter to her sister, begging

her to write and say that she needed her assistance, explaining that the Musgraves were all so kind to her she really must have a good excuse for leaving.

Helen read the letter aloud to Willy, who seized hold of it at once, vowing that he must answer it. "She's playing some game with old Basil Musgrave. I'd give a month's pay to know what it is."

Thereupon he sat down and wrote an affectionate, earnest, and touching letter to his sister-in-law. He was heartily sorry to hurry her return, for he knew how much she would be enjoying herself with his old friends, but he could not help feeling worried about Helen. She was far from strong, and that last baby was giving a lot of trouble, he supposed "with teething."

"That baby's not yet three months old," said Basil, when he heard the letter. "I didn't know they teethed so soon."

"It is a subject on which I should not have expected you to be well-informed," replied his guest demurely, and they all laughed. Basil had a feeling of being checkmated, without knowing why. He had such a short time left in England now and many things might happen if he returned without her.

Madeleine was to have left upon a Thursday, but Janet, feeling conscious of a good deal of duplicity, if not of crime, begged her to wait another day. She wanted to take her to see a benevolent institution in the neighbourhood, a

preventive and rescue home, founded in memory of Lady Dynevor. It was called the Dynevor Home. Certain ladies in the neighbourhood took it in turns to visit the inmates every fortnight. This was Mrs. Musgrave's day; she had a class for needlework, and talked or read aloud while the girls sewed. Since Mrs. Musgrave seemed to attach so much importance to the matter Madeleine could not refuse to stay. While Janet was busy Madeleine talked to the Matron, who showed her over the Institute. Partly out of courtesy, partly from a far deeper source of interest, she asked innumerable questions. The Matron looked at her; it never occurred to her to connect this stranger, whose name she had barely heard, with the Madeleine Leigh whose portrait had been in all the papers. But we bear the history of our lives written upon our face; and here were tragedy and deep experience.

"I see you are interested. I wish you would come and stay, and help me with the girls. We are glad of visitors, especially in the summer when the regular staff take their holiday by turns."

Madeleine's eyes kindled; imagination, thought, desire, soared up again like fire behind those working temples. Here was the chance, the chance for which she had been longing, for doing something for women *after the worst had happened*. "I can't come at once," replied Madeleine truthfully, recalling Willy's letter which she had shown to Mr. Musgrave. "I will leave you my address." She took out her card, and it was not

until she looked at it that the Matron connected her with Madeleine Leigh.

Janet, who appeared at the moment, expressed approval of the idea, though feigning a good deal of surprise. Her conscience reproached her because she had made use of a philanthropic institution to work her wicked will.

Madeleine was very silent and thoughtful as they drove homeward. The girls had interested her, there was less of tragedy and more of frivolity than she had expected in their lives and faces. She thought she should like to live there, she thought that she could calm their storm-tossed hearts and bring them strength and peace. Janet guessed her thoughts, and imagined her toiling with infinite patience to wash their wearied feet.

"They're not wicked," said Madeleine suddenly after a long and thoughtful silence of nearly half an hour, "they lack intensities, they lack a sense of values."

"Sometimes I think that is the only wickedness, the lack of a sense of values. I have had a long experience."

Then she added, "My dear, couldn't you possibly stay and help them? I know how glad they would be. I wouldn't urge it for our own sakes, much as we should love to have you with us a little longer at the cottage. But this work is different, it is impossible to look at the Matron without seeing that she is overworked."

But Madeleine shook her head. The whole con-

sistency of her character, in Basil's eyes, seemed to her at stake.

Her mind, however, reverted to Janet's other words about a sense of values. As she looked back they threw a vivid, penetrating light upon the history of her own life, her father, the old laird, the two McQuoids—everything in their lives had turned on a sense of values. Then her thoughts moved forward. Who among her friends, she asked, had the deepest and truest sense of values?

But Janet could not help wondering whether or no she had been right in what she had done from her own standpoint. She had gained an extra day, but what, after all, was an extra day to Basil amid weeks of absence? Madeleine's presence would be satisfying to the Imes's, no doubt, but they did not hunger for it as Basil hungered. The "face he had seen and the voice he had heard" would be mingled hope and torment for many months to come. Janet's heart yearned over him. She knew that he would steep his soul in work, and work would bring no comfort. Why, she asked, had she followed that desperate blind impulse to gain him another day?

On the day when Madeleine and Mrs. Musgrave had spent a long afternoon at the Dynevor Institute Basil had gone to the nearest town and transacted business, partly on his own account and partly for the widow of an Indian friend. Her income was a small one, and he and the

lawyer discussed the arrangements for the children's education. There were three children ; he was their guardian, and also the god-father of the eldest boy. It suddenly occurred to him that a year ago he would probably have offered to help with their education, and that without thinking twice about the matter. Now he could not manage that ; there was Brenda to think of, though Brenda played at being independent, and then there was the future, and the home of which he was thinking. He must give instead ungrudging time and thought, and he went to see the widow after he had left the lawyer. He talked over many details, and could not get away until he had missed the afternoon train. He could not get back, then, till nearly seven—and Madeleine and his mother were to return at six. He didn't grudge the time to that poor lady—it had been impossible to interrupt her tale of woe—but he could not help wishing he had not missed that train.

The time was getting short, not merely with regard to Madeleine's stay in Devonshire, but to his time in England. There was another three months—how was he to alter the whole of their relationship in ninety days? How was he to know whether he had or had not gained ground the day that Brenda came? He walked about the town, thinking how many of these ninety days must pass before he saw her next.

He walked up to the station, chiefly because he had nowhere else to go, and there he bought a

paper. He went outside to read it, sitting on one of the garden-seats which country-towns provide. He read the Indian news first; nothing very sudden or terrible or unexpected had happened lately. Then he turned to look at the "turn-over," the literary article which finds its way in regularly amid all the telegrams. The title arrested his attention, it was the name of a little-known Spanish village—"The Outlaw of St. Maura." St. Maura was the place to which the ship that had borne Alan McQuoid two years ago was bound.

During that afternoon he had asked himself more than once if this strange being stood in his way with Madeleine. He had seen enough to know, and she had told him enough to know, that day when she blinded his eyes to Brenda's secret, that the tie between them was something more than friendship. Before they left Biarritz he had asked her whether or no he should try to find news of McQuoid, and the negative had been decided. She had not told him then, and she would never tell him, how Alan, God forgive him! in the tumult of his despair had wildly entreated her, day by day, to fly with him. He had not known then, and he would never know, the courage it had needed to face that daily meeting. And he saw that she had the mystical conviction that she would know if she were called upon to intervene.

Basil read through the article; it was written in good English, and with now and again a power

of detailed description which seemed not unworthy of such a theme as that. Basil was glad of it; it would have seemed unfitting for such a tragedy to be closed in common journalese. God is not only God, but the Universe, and the Universe moves forward, casting out despair and working reconciliation, despite of, or perhaps because of, tragedy, and tragic grief and pain. It had not been for nothing that the woman whom he had loved had borne that load of suffering and paid the debt in full. Now she was free, perhaps. Basil Musgrave did not dare to allow himself to think of anything save how to break the news. He walked up from the station; reasoning was useless and thought was useless, he must trust to guidance.

His way lay plain before him. Madeleine was not in the house, but standing under the rose-archway, near the garden-walk. She had on a white dress; he had heard his mother ask her to put it on to go and see the girls. He went up to her and asked if she would come down with him to the beach, he had much to tell her. She turned and looked at him steadily, but his manner and bearing conveyed the thought of trouble, and she was quick to sympathise. It was something out of the ordinary, something, too, that Basil was trying to lift into a higher atmosphere than the ordinary. She did not at first think of herself, she did not realise that it might be solely on her account that he looked like that.

“What is the matter, Basil? You have had

some bad news; how good of you to come to me first of all!"

"It is not exactly bad news, it is terrible and mysterious. It concerns some one whom you and I both know, whom you once saved at a terrible cost."

Madeleine looked at him again, the great nameless terror which lay at her heart found voice and spoke.

"It is Alan." Basil was reminded of a soldier stiffening himself in the hour of battle. If there was anything more to be done or endured on that man's account she would meet it worthily.

It had happened to Basil before now to tell a piece of news, the telling of which was like dealing a deadly blow at his friend's heart. This was worse, far worse. The woman who stood was like a quivering column of pain standing erect and white against the cold red sandstone; she stood there gazing at him with great devouring eyes.

"Alan McQuoid is dead. He died splendidly. He was always a brave man, and his death proved it over afresh. It was a ship-wreck. There seems little reason to doubt that he gave his life to save a boy, a stranger. The boat upset, he lashed the fisherman's boy on to the top of it and then sank himself."

Madeleine tried to speak, she held out her hand for the paper, but the letters swam before her eyes. Great tearing sobs of uncontrollable, long-pent-up emotion forced their way at last. The

fountain of the great deep, the deep of anguish, despair, and murdered love was broken up for ever. She broke down utterly. It must have been her tears that loosed Basil's tongue and gave him speech at last. He was beside her in a moment, pouring out his passion, declaring his love, and that she was his at last. She looked round in mute entreaty, glancing piteously at the paper, but for once in his life he thought of himself alone. The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, but after all it is the violent that take possession of it. He drew her into his arms, overwhelming everything in a torrent of passionate love that she could not resist. He knew in that moment the victory that is given in dread as well as love, in pain as well as hope.

"You are mine, Madeleine, mine for ever, for I have loved you and waited for you since the day I first saw you. Alan McQuoid is dead, he is nothing to you now, though all that you have suffered has saved his soul alive. It is I who have waited for you, he can never come between us, and through all eternity you are mine, my darling, mine, mine for ever!"

And Basil Musgrave, with Madeleine resting in his arms, went on minute after minute, pouring out his love.

Mrs. Musgrave, who thought that three hours at a time was long enough, went to look for them at ten o'clock. She found them reading the account in the paper, which they had just had

time to look at, by the light of the harvest-moon. They read it in the spirit in which those souls who have found a sheltered haven read of wrecks at sea. It was on a beach that they had seen and parted with Alan McQuoid, the man who had lost his manhood, and could only save himself if some one else cared for him. That beach was drear and terrible, but this was warm with the golden glow of the harvest-moon, playing on the deep red rock and the lapping blue waves, on the burnished sea-weed and white, shining sands. And it seemed to them both that Alan McQuoid had been taken into shelter and was at peace, at last.

It was a well-written description, written by a man who loved the things of which he wrote and touched them all with reverence. First, he began by describing just an ordinary, typical, sleepy, dirty, Spanish village. Among the villagers, half-revered, half-feared, like Samson among the Philistines, lived the English giant (a man whom his best friends, had they seen him, would scarcely have recognised as the murderer of Dugald), a man about whom it was clear, even to these simple village-folk, there was a strange mystery. They knew nothing about his history, but the terrible malady from which he suffered could be concealed from no man. And yet this malady, which could not be concealed, was itself his shield and hiding-place and secured his best defence. Descriptions of this man, as he was in his full manhood, had been published in different

languages in every newspaper in Europe. But they described a man with bright auburn hair, in the full vigour of life and full possession of his senses. The Outcast of Santa Maura's hair was grey, and the burden of insanity descended upon him nightly. Before nine o'clock in the evening, and after eleven, he was a man like other men, with more than human strength. But with his grizzled hair and his peculiar malady there was but little chance that any who read his description would recognise Alan McQuoid the murderer, the man in whose stead an English lady had nearly been condemned to penal servitude for life.

The writer of the article had landed in St. Maura on the morning after the night when Alan met his death. He, the writer, was returning from South America on a tramp on which he had shipped as a passenger, from a mingled desire for economy and experience. The ship proved to be older than he had thought, and for long he had had doubts if they would make Southampton. The break-down of the steering-gear occurred about nine o'clock in the evening off the Spanish coast. There was little to be done except to put her head down against, and try to ride, the storm. The wind and tide were dead in each other's teeth, and it was this which enabled them to keep from drifting much. Signals of distress were sent out, of course, but they were short of ammunition for firing minute-guns, and the writer's feeling was that the hope was a forlorn

one. They began firing at nine o'clock—it seemed to the Englishman almost miraculous when they were hailed by a life-boat from the shore. The captain of the life-boat was evidently an Englishman, and one who spoke but little Spanish, though his crew were Spaniards. Nothing could exceed the skill and courage and superhuman strength which he exhibited in the work. He came on board himself to help off the women and children, there were seven, and it was no light matter to get them over the ship's side into the boat, which rocked madly upon the raging sea.

“Time was very precious, for we had not altogether avoided drifting, and had struck upon a rock. The ship was breaking up, but the strange, gigantic Englishman performed prodigies in the way of speed as well as skill. I heard him muttering to himself, ‘It must be done before eleven,’ as though he had calculated the time the ship would last. Judging by my watch, it was almost exactly eleven when the last of us left the sinking vessel.

“It was the captain of the steamer. He was an old man and had insisted pluckily that he would stay till the very end. Brave though the decision was, it was that which led indirectly to the crowning tragedy. He decided to risk a jump, miscalculated the distance, and fell into the sea, throwing up his arms. We knew that he could not swim. He was a Spaniard, and it happens often enough their officers cannot

swim. I never saw anything more strange than the face of our giant rescuer as he watched him go.

“ ‘So this is the end,’ I heard him mutter. ‘Well, after all, it’s a sure way of escape.’ And then raising his hands over his head with a superb unconscious movement he took a splendid header. When he reappeared, bringing the captain with him, it was clear that his own strength was almost spent. A change had come over him, he looked like an old man who has seen his day and scarcely wishes to prolong his life. We took his burden from him, and held out our hands to help him on board, but he shook his head. He looked me full in the face. Somehow or other by that time we had discovered we were fellow-countrymen.

“ ‘You will get them safely to land,’ he said, resting for a moment on the water; ‘my fellows can row and some of your men should be able to take their turn. Ask the curé for my story—he knows it all. Make it known to every one through the English papers, and tell the priest and all the world that I am free at last.’ He sank back, calling aloud a Christian name, or the name of a saint; I think it was the Magdalen. The curé told me afterwards that he was a Roman Catholic.

“ We rowed away slowly. It was curious the sense of weakness and depression that came over us when he had left. I did as he had bidden, and from the village curé found out

his previous history, which I give you in brief below. . . .”

There was one part of the story which was not already familiar to these two who read. Shortly before nine Alan McQuoid was sitting with the curé, a village saint, who had obtained a great influence with this strange Englishman. Alan was just about to leave, as he always did, and lock himself into his little cabin for the night, when he stood upright and declared that he heard minute-guns at sea. He declared also that it was his way of escape, his only chance, he saw his chance at last. The curé thought at first that his fit was on him, but McQuoid's insanity seemed to have turned to that inspired genius to which it is said to be nearly allied. He hurried down into the village, dragging the men out of their beds, and had them into the life-boat before they could murmur a single protest. And the curé, who knew his secret, believed that he saw his chance of redemption, and seized it with all his force. For the man whom the writer of the article knew as the saviour of twenty lives was Alan McQuoid the murderer.

After the rush and hurry of the tale the two who read drew breath, at last, and turned to read the thought in each other's eyes. The passion of their love and of their mutual happiness was purified by admiration as well as by fear and pity.

It had seemed to them as they read that they were looking out on all that storm and struggle,

that wreck, revolt, and ruin, from the shelter of some haven where they had found peace. For these two, who had drawn close to each other beneath the shadow of a great horror, had found their home at last.

Rest after toil,
Port after stormy seas,
Death after life
Doth greatly please.

